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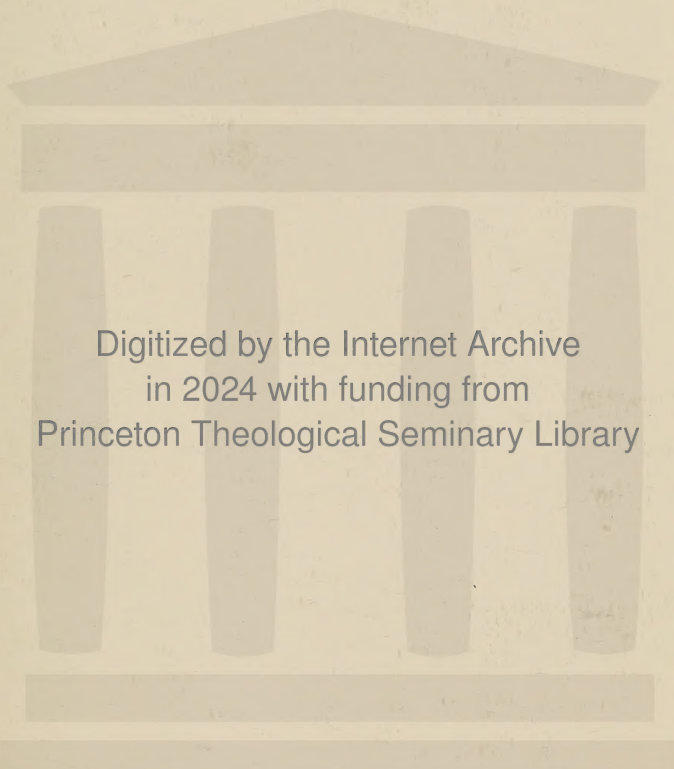




PAGANISM  
*in*  
ROUMANIAN FOLKLORE







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BUCHAREST IN WINTER.

From a painting by Marius Bunescu.

[Frontispiece.]



PAGANISM  
IN  
ROUMANIAN FOLKLORE

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*With Illustrations*

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## Preface

ALMOST all the following papers were first published in periodicals, such as *The Quest*, *The Slavonic Review*, and others, after having been delivered as public lectures at King's College, London University. This is one reason why they have taken a rather literary shape; another stronger reason is that the matters dealt with in these papers are not mere abstractions to me, but things real and fresh, giving colour and joy to one's innermost life.

In my childhood, I myself prayed to the moon, I myself accompanied the procession of the bride-goddess to the various fountains, and I often wore a disguise for the ritual dances.

No doubt faded remnants of such pagan usages linger also in other parts of the world. I have tried to correlate some of these with the Roumanian customs, though only casually—not because I do not appreciate the comparative method; on the contrary, I have added a chapter on “Scottish and Roumanian Ballads,” which is little else but a study in parallelisms, and which shows of what advantage such a method might be.

M. B.



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# PAGANISM IN ROUMANIAN FOLKLORE

## I

### CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

I TURN my mind back a few years, and I fancy myself walking in the streets of Bucharest at the approach of Christmas. All is covered in white; the glittering flakes of snow fall incessantly. Every now and then sledges pass with a merry tinkling. In front of the shop windows people gather, wondering at the many beautiful things displayed there. Conspicuous among the crowds by their dress are the newly arrived peasants, come to make their purchases. There is everywhere a hasty, unusual bustle, which gradually diminishes as the night draws near, though it is kept up and prolonged a good while after nightfall in the cafés. Now the snow flashes here and there under the lights—steady street-lights and wandering lights of the

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sleighs. Detached tunes of gipsy music linger in the air. At the quieter corners one catches, as in sleep, a subdued little dissyllabic cry ; and on looking round, there is the chestnut-roaster with his lamp and his purple-red fire, which conveys such a pleasant, warm feeling.

Apart from some local touches, as one might judge, the scene is here similar to that of any great city in England. Nor is there much difference in the practice attending the festival. The interchange of greetings and presents is customary here, too, as is the charmingly starlit Christmas-tree with some of the more refined classes.

In the very early morning, about three o'clock, the birth of the Divine Child is heralded by the bells. Bucharest possesses numerous churches, and they all contribute to the beauty of the town as seen from a distance.

“ The metal plates which cover the domes of the two hundred churches,” writes J. W. Ozanne in his book, *Three Years in Roumania*, “ reflecting the dazzling rays of the brilliant sun, produce an effect which may be described as splendid.” From all these churches, then, great and little bells begin ringing at once on Christmas morn—not with the grand harmony, overpowering to the extent of being somewhat oppressive, of the Russian bells ; neither







THE STAR.

(See page 13.)

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have they, as in England, that distant, veiled sound which gives one the impression of coming from far beyond realities. Here in the cold, yet very often bright, atmosphere, they ring so cheerfully and clear, these many, many bells.

But in order to see the real Roumanian Christmas one has to get into the country. A sledge takes one there easily. As soon as it is out of town, swifter and swifter it glides on amidst the snow-wrapt plains, where from time to time silhouettes of wells appear with their long beams pointing towards the sky like fantastic birds. The villages are hardly seen—they are rather guessed at by the smoke rising from them. One enters them usually through rows of trees, all white with frost and icicles, standing by rivulets smitten into silence. And in silence, too, save for the cawing of the rooks, lie the scattered huts; nay, those of the more secluded parts seem quite lost under the snows. Having little or no intercourse with the outside, friends and neighbours assemble here to do work together on many of the winter nights. Then, around the warm hearth, whilst their hands are usefully engaged, what laughter and fun and story-telling! As in one of the most popular of their folk-tales the pearls miraculously string themselves, so the stories grow and link with

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each other—a whole pageant of wondrous creatures. At times a pause ensues of a sudden. They start and listen. Strange knocks are heard on the window ; now the wind roars with something of evil foreboding. And there comes a dread, mainly of those malignant, dark spirits who, during the time before Epiphany, haunt every place.

The larger villages are filled with the mixed noises of the markets. A picturesque sight these ! On little wooden stalls pitched without order, in Oriental fashion, are exhibited for sale any objects one might require. Prices are cried out. Men and women come, bargain loudly, ramble about, mingle together, people of all conditions—the toiler of the land, the mountain shepherd in his sheepskin cloak, and the ever-tramping gipsy. Everyone is getting ready. Not only for Christmas. They follow so close upon it, all the other winter festivals : New Year's Day, on which St. Basil is also celebrated, and Epiphany, and St. John the Baptist. Besides, people have fasted now for six whole weeks, and naturally these great days are made the occasion for a jolly good feasting—feasting mainly on pork and turkey.

And among the boys, in their own busy world, how many preparations ! They join together in small bands, and on Christmas Eve they go from



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house to house singing carols. These bear a special name of *colinde*. Composed largely in blank verse, they are of much interest, not only for their peculiar blending of Pagan and Christian ideas, but likewise for allusions they contain to the life and circumstances of yore. The most familiar is the one beginning :

“ To-night, great night,  
White flowers !  
The great night of Christmas,  
White flowers ! ”

Or that given by V. Alexandri in his *Folk-Poems* :

“ Arise, great boyars, arise,  
White flowers ! . . . ”

Their singing ends up with a loud, hearty greeting by the whole band :

“ Good-morning to the old Christmas ! ” Upon which they ask, and are given, besides fruit or money, a kind of home-made cake.

The custom differs somewhat in Macedonia amongst the Roumanians as well as amongst the Greeks and Slavs, for here the boys are provided with sticks or clubs, and they knock hard at the doors, shouting : “ *Colinde, colinde !* ” to which they add a few simple verses. I give those used in the village of Clisura :

## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

“ Colinde, colinde,  
Christ was born  
In the stable of oxen  
For fear of the Jews.  
The horse uncovered Him,  
The ox did cover Him.”

The last words allude to the relation of the Virgin Mary with the two animals. It is told by the people that, after the Child's birth in the stable, Mary covered Him with hay. Both the ox and the horse then stirred from their place, and Mary bade them be still. The ox obeyed, breathed even to keep the Child warm, whereupon Mary blessed him that he should be always content and quiet; whilst the horse not only disregarded Mary's request, but stamped on the ground, neighed and pulled the hay from over the Babe, so that Mary cursed him never to find rest and satisfaction.

This is but an episode in the eventful journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. If one examines the Christmas carols carefully, one finds many other points of interest. Thus one of them tells how, when on the road, Mary was seized with pains, and lay down under a poplar tree, which did not withhold its rustling, and Mary cursed it that it should shake and tremble for ever, be it calm or windy weather. Mary then rose and walked until she found her most needed rest under the evergreen

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and ever-blessed fir tree. Later on Mary came to Bethlehem, and knocked everywhere for shelter, but no one would accept her. At last she chanced upon the palace of one *Crăciun*, where she was allowed to enter the stables. As a matter of fact, *Crăciun*—a word of doubtful origin—means Christmas, and we thus have a simple personification of a cruel power adverse to the holy Babe's birth. An idea seems to cling here that is reminiscent of the opposition between the old spirit of decay and the new fertilising spirit. This pagan background is also emphasised by a number of carols. I shall refer especially to one of the many variants.

The Lady Mary, wearing the black robes of a nun, wanders through the world in search of her Son. She arrives at the waters of Jordan, where she addresses the godfather of Jesus :

“ Listen, John,  
St. John !  
Hast thou seen  
Or hast thou heard  
Of my Son,  
The Lord of Heaven  
And of earth ? ”

St. John tells her what he himself has heard with his ears concerning the Crucifixion, and advises her to go to the fountain of Pilat, if she wishes to get a glimpse of her Son. Mary goes thither sobbing

## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

and crying ; and when at last she reaches that place and sees her Son “ like a luminous morning star,” she asks Him :

“ O, thou flower of basilic,  
Why hast Thou allowed Thyself  
To fall into the hands of strangers,  
In the land of the heathen ! ”

Jesus then explains that He has done it for the sake of the world, and gives a glowing picture of the benefits to arise :

“ The fields will be seen  
Green with grass,  
And the fountains with cold water,  
And whoever dies  
Will belong to God ! ” <sup>1</sup>

Now, in the image of Mary here does one not recognise that of the ancient Mother Goddess in search of her beloved Osiris or Adonis or Dionysos, whose death and resurrection bring about the revival of nature ? We know that the mysteries of the latter included certain rituals such as dances in the shape of animals, sounding of drums and cymbals, and mimetic thunder. This was produced by a bull-roarer—the Greek *ρόμβος*—a piece of wood with a string through it. A similar device with

<sup>1</sup> See *Folk-Lore*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, 1923, Dr. M. Gaster's article, “ Roumanian Popular Legends of the Lady Mary.”

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all its magical significance enters into to-day's practices in Roumania, when wandering about the houses is taken up again on St. Basil's Day. It consists of a little bucket provided with a well-stretched skin, through which one or more horse-hairs are inserted. The pulling of the hairs produces a deep sound like the lowing of a bullock; hence its name after that of the animal itself—*buhaiu*. Add to this the cracking of lashes and the continuous ringing of sheepbells. In the absence of one of the instruments, any other object, such as a broken scythe or a pork-bladder filled with grains, would answer the purpose. Of course, there are kind people who seem to enjoy, if not the music, at least the fun and good cheer of its producers. But some object to this kind of thing, do not like to be annoyed at a time when, as they would say, the chickens have already gone to sleep. Ion Creangă, a well-known Roumanian writer, tells us, in his *Recollections from Childhood*, that, entering a house with the whole band on a New Year's Eve, their first accents caught the ears of the householder just at the moment she was raking the fire of the kiln to put the cakes in, and out she rushed after them with the burning poker and not less burning language.

To the combined music of the aforesaid paraphernalia—that is, the *buhaiu*, the cracking of whips



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and ringing of bells—are sung or recited or even shouted different poems bearing on the prosperous harvest to come, a vivid symbol of which is also sometimes displayed in the shape of a decorated plough driven by oxen.

This fertility ceremony is further enhanced by the fact that some of the boys hold in their right hands rods decked with paper flowers called *sorcova*; they approach and tap one with the greeting:

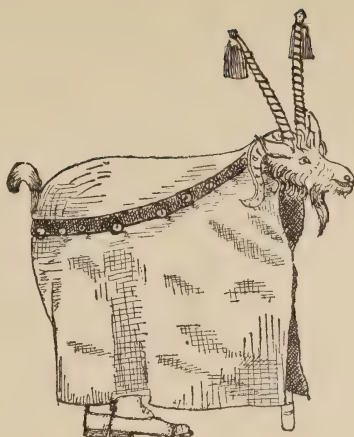
“ May you live  
And flourish  
Like an apple tree  
Or a pear tree  
In time of spring;  
Like a stem of rose,  
Strong as iron,  
Gleaming as steel,  
Swift as the arrow.” <sup>1</sup>

*Sorcova* is probably derived from *soorva*, the Slavonic for boughs, and in some parts of Macedonia is replaced by a real green bough from an olive tree. With regard to the animal disguises mentioned above as an element of the Dionysian ritual, it is to be noted that nowadays in Roumania the carol-singers are sometimes accompanied by bogeys known as *brezaia*, *capra* or *turca*—that is, men with the head of a goat or bull and a long beak which claps now

<sup>1</sup> Given also in Princess Bibescu's *Isvor*, p. 204, London.



BUHAIU.



CAPRA.



SORCOVA.



SORCOVA.



BREZAIA.



## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

and again, when pulled by a string. They go from house to house, and dance and recite verses, mostly of a satirical turn.

On Christmas Eve and the following days until Epiphany, one would also meet in the streets groups of boys carrying a huge star, and singing :

“ Who receives the star,  
The bright, beautiful star ? ”

It is made of coloured paper, illuminated from within, and representing scenes connected with the birth of Christ. In company with the star, a mumming play is very often produced. The essential characters who take part in it are those well known in St. Matthew's Gospel : Herod the King, with one or two officials, the three Magi, and a heavenly messenger.<sup>1</sup> I remember that when at school I impersonated this last character, attired as an angel with white thin tights, two large wings, a wooden sword, and a good many little bells. I cannot understand to the present day the significance of those bells. I was supposed to arrive, or rather to emerge, suddenly ; yet such a lot of tinkling-tinkling went round before my appearance. And there I was—a very poor angel, indeed ! As few people invited

<sup>1</sup> An interesting play of the kind is given in *Graiul și Folklorul Maramureșului*, by Tache Papahagi, pp. 183-201, București, 1925.

## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

us indoors, my lips trembled with cold till I became speechless, with no thought save to return quickly to the protection of my coat.

Long afterwards, these performances were the subject of much laughter and parody amongst us in school. We made great fun, I recollect, of one of the players—a simple fellow, who took himself very seriously, with a long, dark robe, and a hand on his yarn-beard, used to say, in a deeply conscious voice: “I remember, too, the words of the Prophet Balaam. . . .”

No doubt, both the star and the mumming are of a mediæval date. Various later influences entered also in all the other customs; but their true origin and meaning could be traced far back. The great Roman festivals of Saturnalia and Opalia were celebrated in a very similar way. And there is a sense of pleasure, touched with a certain melancholy, to look in Latin authors for such revealing passages on the subject, and see how the same old conceptions underlie these customs, in spite of the tremendous gulf of time which separates us from them.

In Martial, for instance, one finds an epigram about the usual eating of pork on Christmas: “This pig, fed on acorns among foaming wild boars, will make you a merry Saturnalia.” Macrobius says that some people used to send each other





CAROL-SINGERS.

(See page 5.)



ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS.

Scene from a Nativity Play.

(See page 13.)



## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

*placentas*. These are but the special Christmas cakes of our days, to which the carol-singers allude, thinking on how they are going to be received :

“ With a cake of pure flour,  
On the cake the jug of wine,  
To have the feast complete ! ”

Once a big cake of the sort, nicely adorned, was laid with a kind of ceremony upon the table, and left there for many days, as is still done by a section of the Vlachs in Macedonia—the whole proceeding being reminiscent of Ovid’s description in the *Fasti* : “ Something of the ancient use had come down to our years ; a pure platter bears the food offered to Vesta. . . . ”

Even the manner in which these cakes are made presents a striking resemblance to what Ovid further points out : “ In old days the peasant baked only the grain in ovens—the goddess of kilns having, too, her own rites. The hearth itself used to bake the bread, covered over with ashes, and the potsherd laid upon the hot ground.”

Could ever the author of these lines have thought that, long after him, a new people would arise to keep on the customs and traditions, and even the tongue of his own people, in a remote land, where he himself had voiced the sorrows of an exile in the full cadences of his *Tristia* and *Epistulæ ex Ponto* ?

## II

### THE MOON

Through its magic light and its influence on earthly creatures and things, the moon has of old given rise to various legends and superstitions. A number of these are still to be found among the Roumanians. And, though in some cases they have lost any sort of meaning, while in others they appear travestied in Christian garb, they are none the less vestiges of a bygone pagan world.

In Roumanian folk tradition the moon is a beautiful maiden, sister of the sun. Thus a popular Christmas carol alludes to her as

“ The little sister of the sun,  
The Fairies’ little niece,  
The beauty of beauties.”

A ballad of Transylvania sings with regard to the moon :

“ Only the sister of the sun  
Stands at the gate of paradise.”

## THE MOON

Again, a folk-story belonging to the Roumanians of Macedonia tells about a bridegroom named Birbicusha, how on the very night of the wedding he was carried away by the fairies. The bride, in great despair, set out to find him. On her way she arrived at the palace of the Sun-God, who answered to all her inquiries : “ My daughter, I know nothing of this rape, for I shine only by day, and Birbicusha was stolen away by night. But I can give thee advice. Go to the Moon-Goddess, my sister ; she dwells on the other side of the world.”

There is a Roumanian legend in verse which speaks of the sun's attempt at an incestuous union with his own sister, the moon. I give an abbreviated translation :

For nine years the sun went in search of a bride. He rushed through the sky and over the earth, but nowhere could he find one to match in beauty his sister Ileana-Sânziana. And he spoke to her :

“ Little sister, gold-haired Ileana, let us plight our troth together.”

“ O thou bright one, who has ever seen, who has ever heard of a brother wedding his own sister ? ”

The sun darkened and mounted to the throne of God, praying that he might be allowed to marry her. The Lord showed him both hell and paradise, and then bade him choose between the two. The



## THE MOON

sun made answer : " Better hell than I should ever be alone, without my sister Ileana."

Thereupon the sun descended to earth. He came to his sister and decked her with a jewelled robe and the crown of a queen. They two repaired to the church. During the ceremony all of a sudden the candles went out, the saints hid themselves, the priests fell on their knees, and the unfortunate bride saw a hand stretched out—a hand that seized hold of her and cast her into the sea, where she became a golden barbel. The sun rose towards the west and flung himself into the waters after his sister. But the Lord took the fish in his hand, threw it up and changed it into the moon. Then he said in a thundering voice that they should gaze on each other from afar across the skies and never meet again. So it is that when the moon shines, the sun sets ; when the sun rises, the moon hides in the sea.

In a variant of the same legend, collected by G. Dem. Teodorescu,<sup>1</sup> Ileana consents to marry the sun on condition that he would build an iron bridge over the Black Sea and a ladder reaching the sky. At once the sun carried out this task ; climbed to heaven, and there met Adam and Eve, who led him through hell and paradise.

<sup>1</sup> *Poesii Populare*, p. 10. București, 1885.





MUMMERS WITH BUHAU AND DRUM.  
Ethnographical Museum of Cluj.  
(See page 9.)

## THE MOON

In both versions one has to note that such Christian elements as the Church, the saints, priests, were interwoven into the story at a later date and are of no real import; the only essential is the relation of the moon to the sun. And on this point the remote, primeval origin of the Roumanian legend could be exhaustively shown. In G. Dem. Teodorescu there is a passage which thus describes the moon :

“ Ileana  
Sânziana,  
The queen of flowers  
And the carnations,  
The sister of the sun,  
The foam of the milk.”

Sânziana strikes me as no other than Santa Diana, corresponding to the Greek Artemis, who in course of time came to be considered a Moon-Goddess, sister of the Sun-God Apollo. As for the union in wedlock of a brother and sister, it formed one of the deeply rooted conceptions in many an old religion, and reflected, no doubt, a social custom once prevalent. The powerful Egyptian goddess Isis was the sister and wife of the god Osiris; the Greek goddess Hera likewise enjoyed the favour of being both sister and wife to the greatest among deities, Zeus; and their marriage often recurs in glowing classical descriptions. It constituted what is known in the Eleu-

## THE MOON

sinian mysteries as *ἱερός γάμος*, sacred marriage, dramatically enacted before the people. One hears of a like representation in Knossos by the queen and king, masked as a cow and bull respectively, which symbolised the love of Pasiphaë, the “all-shining” or the moon, for a marvellous white bull rising out of the sea—that is, the sun. Furthermore, Dictynna, an ancient Cretan goddess somewhat akin to Diana, was conceived as a shy virgin who entered the sea in order to escape the embrace of the sun, her lover.<sup>1</sup> Here the very picture of the moon plunging into the waters before her pursuer, the sun—strikingly similar to our own Sânziana, but an image which could hardly occur to a people not in contact with the sea—speaks a good deal for the far-away, strange origin of the Roumanian legend.

Now I pass on to the superstitions about the moon. Dr. Johnson, in his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, says that the Highlanders used to expect better crops of grain by sowing their seed in the moon’s increase. Such exactly is the belief of the Roumanian peasant, and with regard also to fruit-bearing trees; but plants or vegetables whose essential parts grow under the earth, such as onions, have to be sown during the waning moon—a practice implying the idea of lunar sympathy. If a

<sup>1</sup> See J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, IV, pp. 72–73.







BOYS CARRYING WHAT IS CALLED A BETHLEHEM ARK.  
(See page 10.)

## THE MOON

woman is busy at her spinning-wheel, she ought to cease work at the appearance of the new moon ; not even a brooding hen is to be allowed to sit on her eggs at that time. Children hail the new moon loudly with the words :

“ Moon, new moon,  
Cut the bread in two  
And give us,  
Half to thee,  
Health to me ! ”

Housewives at the sight of the new moon ride on pokers through the rooms and repeat while sweeping : “ Go out, ye flies, for the moon is getting married and is inviting you all to the feast ! ”

But these practices are rather in the way of a joke. Very different is the case with the Roumanians of Macedonia. I still remember how my grandmother used to approach me in a soft whisper : “ Come, dear, the new moon ! ” Then she would put a loaf of bread or a specially-prepared cake on my head, and a silver coin in my pocket, and at the same time give me two brass vessels filled with water to hold. All these objects naturally stood for symbols of prosperity, and the water of the vessels was known as *apă mută* or *apă nențepută*, speechless, virgin water. Making me turn round three times and look straight at the moon, my grandmother would

## THE MOON

slowly utter, with deep religious solemnity, the verses, which I murmured after her :

“Lună, lună, noau,  
Ghine cât aroau ;  
Câtă-arină 'n vale  
Punga li tate ;  
Câtă sprună 'n casă,  
Ahâți oamiîni pri measă ;  
Tine ca mine  
Ș'io ca tine !”

It is most difficult to translate these lines, because they are all elliptical. I try, however, to give their exact meaning :

“Moon, new moon, let goodness be like the dew ; as much sand in the river, so the purse of the father ; as the cinders in the house, so many guests at our table ; thou like me, and I like thee !”

Such addresses are not merely poetical fancies roused by the wandering beauty of the moon. Nor are they simple forms of sympathetic magic, as one would be more inclined to believe. There enters into them, I think, a pale, far-off remembrance of religious worship.

Among the Roumanians of Macedonia one is warned to be careful not to speak when out of doors during the moon's increase, lest one should catch an illness or fall under one of the spells that are then cast in the bright air. For then is the most pro-

## THE MOON

pitious time for sorceries; then the witches ride stark naked on long distaffs to the deep valleys or up into the high places, either to draw the moon down or to gather the lunar fluid that affects one's brain.

But the moon that exercises such a disturbing, dangerous influence possesses in herself too a high curative power. Even the water of a spring in which she bathes her white cold beams is endowed with healing properties. Therefore on many occasions one beseeches the moon, and appeals to her as to a good fairy or to an old protecting goddess, to drive away one's ills or evil spells.

In this connection we have a real masterpiece of a Roumanian folk-charm.<sup>1</sup> It is clad in the usual Christian atmosphere, with prayers to the Virgin Mary, credo recitations and so on, all of which are but later additions. In order to realise its pagan character and trace it back to its line of descent, I shall put it parallel with two other ancient invocations to the Moon-Goddess. First the Orphic hymn to Artemis, charged with that shadowy sense of old rituals, which begins :

<sup>1</sup> Found in *De spargerea fermecelor*, a scarce pamphlet of the eighteenth century. I am indebted to Dr. M. Gaster for the communication of the charm, which has since been reproduced in *Din Folklorul Romanic* by Tache Papahagi, pp. 166-168, Bucureşti, 1923.



## THE MOON

Κλῦθί μεν, ὦ βασίλεια, Διὸς πολυώνυμε κούρη.

“Hear me, queen, celebrated daughter of Zeus!”

and in a characteristic manner ends :

“Come, auspicious goddess, friendly to all mysteries, bringing good fruits on earth, gentle peace and health with lovely hair, and banish unto the tops of mountains sickness and grief!”

Then Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*, writing at a time of mythological confusion, when the original Moon-Goddess of the Greeks and Romans was merged in various other divinities, whether she be Dame Ceres, celestial Venus or Proserpine—whoever she may be, says Apuleius :

“O blessed queen of heaven, Thou, which dost luminate all the cities of the earth by Thy feminine light; Thou, which nourishest all the seeds of the world by Thy damp heat, giving Thy changing light according to the wanderings, near or far, of the sun; by whatsoever name or fashion or shape it is lawful to call upon Thee, I pray Thee to end my great travail and misery and raise up my fallen hopes, and deliver me from the wretched fortune which so long time pursued me. Grant peace and rest, if it please Thee, to my adversities, for I have endured enough labour and peril.”<sup>1</sup>

Now one could better appreciate the Roumanian incantation :

<sup>1</sup> W. Adlington's translation in the Loeb Classical Library, pp. 541-2.

## THE MOON

“ A new moon has put on a crown of precious gems. Luminous moon, who art in heaven and seest everything on the earth, I find no rest in my home from the hatred of my enemies who have risen up with great wickedness against me and against my house; and thou too, bright moon, shalt have no peace either, unless thou takest the spell and charm from our house, and from our table, and from my face, and from the face of my wife, and from our property, and from our wealth. Luminous moon, whether the spell has been cast by a man or by a woman or by a youth, take the spell from our house and from my wealth and from my cattle, and from my garden, and from my orchard, and from all my things ! . . . ”

Here follows the enumeration of the various kinds of spells. One remembers the witches' scene in *Macbeth*: the boiling cauldron holds about twenty-three elements to be numbered in the making of that dreadful charm, cooled with a baboon's blood. In our incantation one finds a spell of no less than ninety-nine forms, some of which are :

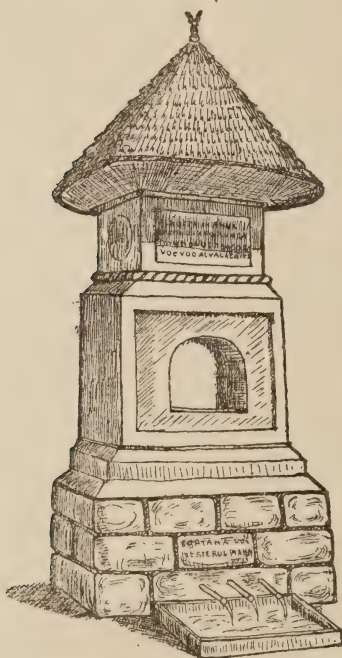
“ Spell with the egg of a strangled hen,  
Spell with the rope of a hanged man,  
Spell with the claw of a blind rat,  
Spell with a dead man's hand,  
Spell with the skin of a snake,  
Spell with the dust of a grave,  
Spell with the hair of the dead,  
Spell with the brains of a magpie,” etc.

The invocation then is taken up again in a renewed

## THE MOON

and last appeal, not devoid of a quaint warmth of feeling :

“ O luminous moon, luminous moon, come and take away the spell and the desolation, and the hatred from the world, and from my house, and from my table, and from my garden, and from my vineyard, and from my craft, and from my trade, and from my purse, and drive it away to wild mountains and forests ; and us and our children and those who shall be born unto us hereafter, leave us clean and pure like refined gold and like the sun that shines brilliantly in the skies ! ”



FOUNTAIN.

### III

#### THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

THERE exists an old custom known under the name of Kalojan, spelt in Roumanian *Caloian*, which is mentioned in a few lines by Sir James Frazer. The author of *The Golden Bough* knew it only from allusions made by occasional travellers in Roumania ; therefore he was unable to give it that full significance which no doubt it deserves. He ranges the Kalojan among other usual practices for making rain, based upon sympathetic magic. It will be seen to what extent this might be granted. First, let me say that, for the obvious purpose of procuring rain, one finds in Roumania another widespread custom—I mean the Paparude.

In time of drought, a girl, usually a gipsy, being stripped of her clothes, and then dressed only in leaves, weeds and flowers, goes through the village. At each doorway people drench her with water, while she dances and sings—together with a whole escort of others—such songs as are purported to bring down the much-needed rain :

## THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

“Paparuda-ruda,  
Come and wet us,  
That rain may fall,  
With water pails:  
To make the corn grow  
As high as the hedges,  
To increase the crop  
And fill up the barns.”

Among the Roumanians of Macedonia the custom is identical, except for the version of the song which, being shorter and less known, I give also in the original :

“Pirpirună,  
Saradună,  
Dă ploaie, dă,  
S'crească agrăle,  
Agrăle ș'vinile,  
Ierghile ș'livăzile !”

### Translation :

“Pirpiruna, saraduna, give rain, give, for the fields to grow—the fields and the vines, the grass and the meadows !”

The Vlach name for Paparuda is Pirpiruna ; hence the expression : “ S'fețe pirpirună,” he or she was made Pirpiruna, used for someone who has been thoroughly soaked in the rain. The word means a poppy, and I am at a loss to account for the connec-





CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS PLAY REPRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE OF CERNAUTZI, BUKOVINA.

(See pages 5-14.)



## THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

tion with this particular flower ; but a hint of interest might be gathered from Zagor, a district of Epirus, where the poppy is considered essential in the adornment of the Pirpiruna. The term in Greek being also *περπερούνα*, a diminutive from *περπερία*, John Lawson propounded a Greek derivation.<sup>1</sup> In my judgment he has lost sight of the fact that the custom is not to be met with in Greece or in the Greek Islands ; therefore it is more likely that the Greeks borrowed it from other people living in Thessaly, Macedonia, Epirus, and even Dalmatia. In some of these places the principal rôle of the Paparuda is taken by a young man, this resembling the practice in India, where a boy is clad in green and hailed as the King of Rain.<sup>2</sup>

Now, in contrast to the Paparuda, which is generally observed at any time of drought, the Kalojan has a fixed date, and thus presents the character of a ritual. On the Monday before the Assumption groups of maidens make from clay the figure of a youth, which they place in a small coffin. A pall is thrown over it, and flowers and various aromatic plants such as basil, mint and so forth by way of embellishment. Then they slowly raise the

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Greek Folklore*, p. 24, Cambridge, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> *The Golden Bough*, Vol. I, p. 275.

## THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

coffin—one of the girls personifying the priest, another the deacon, a third carrying the flag of mourning, exactly as is done at a real funeral; and thus, with loud singing, with tears, with burning of incense and lighted candles, they go in procession to a secluded spot under poplars or under thorn bushes, where they bury the Kalojan. On the third day, at dawn, the girls meet again and proceed to unearth the youth of clay, singing a melancholy strain of lament for him as they did before :

“ Jan, Kalojan,  
As our tears drop,  
May the rain drop  
Night and day  
To fill the ditches  
And all the grass.”

or

“ Jan, Kalojan,  
Go to Heaven,  
Open the gates  
And let loose the rains  
To run down like streams  
Night and day  
For the crops to grow !”

One would easily deduce from this that Kalojan is nothing but a rain charm; however, there is another version of the song which, being the one



KALOJAN.  
(See page 29.)





## THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

most used, throws quite a different light on the matter. It runs thus—I give the Roumanian text first :

“ Coloiene, Iene,  
Mă-ta te-a cătat  
Prin pădurea deasă  
Cu inima arsă,  
Prin pădurea rară  
Cu inima-amară.  
Iene, Caloiene,  
Mă-ta că te plânge  
Cu lacrimi de sânge ! ”

Translation :

“ Jan, Kalojan,  
Your mother sought you,  
Broken-hearted,  
Through deep woods  
And through the glades;  
Jan, Kalojan,  
With burning tears  
Your mother weeps for you ! ”

In order to realise the true meaning of the song, one has to bear in mind what happens to Kalojan before as well as after his burial, because the ceremony does not end there. Once unearthed, he is borne away further and thrown into running water or a well. Then all the company who lamented him

## THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

return to one of the village inns and feast and dance together, proclaiming with joy that Kalojan is not dead, Kalojan has risen from the grave!

Looking carefully into all the features of this custom, does not one recognise that this Kalojan is the same characteristic figure of the ancient world whose death and resurrection symbolised the decay and revival of nature itself? One remembers the words of Ezekiel in the Bible: "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was towards the north; and behold, there sat the women weeping for Tammuz." No doubt this was a deity foreign to the House of Judah, brought over from Babylon, and whether called Tammuz or Attis, Osiris or Adonis, he was always represented as the divine lover of a goddess and worshipped everywhere in the likeness of an image, after which people used to mourn and rejoice. Of course, the rite differed in detail from place to place; and were one to ask of which exactly among these gods our Kalojan is a direct descendant, one could hardly answer. For in course of time such a medley of pagan influences grew up which are somewhat reflected in the various monuments found in Roumania as a result of excavations. Side by side with clay idols of Aphrodite in the Bucharest





HEAD OF HELIOS.  
Dobrudja Excavations.  
(See page 32.)



## THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

Museum one would see two marble bas-reliefs of the Persian sun-god Mithras and the typical rustic deity of the Romans, Sylvanus, and also a statue in marble of Isis.

Take the song of Kalojan. There is mention of a mother who runs through the woods wailing for the lost youth. And she is none other than the great earth-goddess Cybele, looked upon by the Phrygians as both mother and spouse of the beautiful Attis. In other points the festival of Kalojan resembles that of old Osiris. The Egyptians believed him to be a man-god whom his brother, through a wicked device, contrived to murder, scattering his body into forty pieces. But his faithful sister, deeply sorrowing, went in search of these; one by one she gathered the limbs, put them together and imparted new life to Osiris. Such stories of the divine couple—the fatal quest of Isis, the finding of the dismembered body, the joy over its resurrection, all were dramatically enacted every year at the religious centres of Egypt. So far, we know that an image of Osiris was made of earth, put into a wooden coffin and carried to the grave. Later accounts, such as that given by Theocritus of the festival in Alexandria, strongly influenced by Greeks to the extent of replacing Osiris and

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Isis by Adonis and Aphrodite, tell us of two effigies representing the divine pair, whose sacred union was celebrated on one day, and on the following morning one of the effigies, that of "the thrice-beloved Adonis, beloved even in the nether world," in the very words of Theocritus :

ὁ τριφίλητος "Αδωνις ὁ κῆν Ἀχέροντι φιλεῖται,

was borne by lamenting women and cast into the sea.

All these various elements are found exactly in the description I gave of our custom, to which I have to add that in some parts of Roumania, after having been unearthed, the Kalojan is torn up into many pieces and thrown into a river or well; in other parts two figures of clay are moulded, just as was done in Alexandria, one of which is committed to the waters, whilst the company of maidens cry with joy :

"The father of Sun is dead and the mother of Rain is risen from the dead !"

This last feature dates, I think, from a later period, when Osiris came to symbolise death and Isis life.

I pass on now to the derivation of the name which has puzzled many a philologist. Why Kalojan? The Tammuz of Babylon comes from an older form, *Dumuzi*, or more fully *Dumuzi-absu*, which

## THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

means "True son of the waters"; on the other hand, an inscription found at the temple of Phile—an inscription on a picture representing the dead Osiris—reads as follows :

"This is the form of him one may not name, Osiris of the mysteries, who springs from the returning waters."<sup>1</sup>

These two instances show that from the very beginning our god-lover had, and continued later to have, a direct connection with water. On the advent of Christianity that same god, be he Tammuz, Adonis, Attis or Osiris, as well as his ritual, was still in great favour among the people; and the fathers of the Church thought better to deal with him as they did with other pagan deities; namely, to replace them with similar figures of Christianity: so that Adonis became John, St. John, whose very surname of Baptist speaks enough for his relation to water. To this day women in Western Russia on the day of this same saint make a figure from branches, grass and herbs to represent John the Baptist, which they throw into the water.<sup>2</sup> Therefore I hold that Kalojan is the Christian equivalent of Adonis, coming from Kalo-Jan. By way of analogy, John, the eldest son of Alexios IV and

<sup>1</sup> See Jane Ellen Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual*, Home University Library, pp. 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> *The Golden Bough*, Vol. I, p. 277.

## THE PAPARUDE AND KALOJAN

partner of the throne of Trebizond, was called "Kalojan," on account of his handsome appearance.<sup>1</sup> For the same reason, I suppose, the surname of "Kalojan" was given to the Vlacho-Bulgarian Emperor Johannitza.

Thus, both in details of the practice and in derivation of the name, Kalojan is a direct survival of the ancient Adonis ritual.

<sup>1</sup> *Trebizond*, by W. Miller, p. 81, London, 1926.

## IV

### THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

ONE has, no doubt, heard of the old English dance called the Hobby-horse. Once widespread, it had already begun to fall into oblivion in Shakespeare's time, as *Hamlet* testifies :

“For O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot.”

But in Roumania the dance continues in its original form even to this day, being closely connected with the feast of All Souls. I shall first deal with the latter ; seeing that the feast not only throws light on the meaning of the dance, but is also in itself of high importance. For the All Souls' festival involves the people's conception of life-beyond—a conception too deeply hidden in the affections to be reached by cold reasoning and queries. The seeker has to look for a solemn, rare occasion when it may burst upon him unexpectedly, as happened to myself once.

One summer afternoon, whilst journeying along the highlands of Macedonia, I beheld through the

## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

trembling sunlight men and horses gathered round a certain spot. I inquired of a muleteer who passed me running :

“ What is it ? ”

“ A dead traveller. I am taking the news to the monastery.”

I then drew near to see. Among high ferns lay the dead—a man with a fair, large face. His lips were tightly closed ; the upper lip, slightly turned in, gave him a bewildered expression, as if he were asking : “ What has come to me ? ” The men standing around began to tell how it happened. While on the road they saw someone making desperate signs with both hands. They hastened up. But when they arrived it was all over. Then they shut his eyes and turned his face eastwards. One of them added, pointing to the dead : “ Strong he was a while ago and full of plans. . . . As for death, no thought. But who thinks of death ? ” The others gave no answer. Over their faces there passed a dark shadow of perplexity.

“ As if he never existed ! ” remarked one. “ And who knows, had he any pain ? There are people who suffer. . . . ”

“ Yes, in case of illness. But when death takes one suddenly, one opens his mouth and out the soul flies.”







BRONZE WORKS.  
Dobrudja Excavations.  
(See page 32.)

## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

“ I have often wondered,” began a rather shy man, who had hitherto kept silent, “ what might the soul be? A breath? And does it feel? They say it meets other souls gone before, and they recognise each other. But how is one to know? Whoever has come back to tell? Besides, where do they dwell, since people have died and died for ages? ”

“ You think there is little space up there! ” observed another, raising his hand towards the sky.

The sun was just setting, and tinged with crimson the clouds that seemed to shape a giant entrance to the world of mysteries. Beneath the clouds numbers of birds came into sight. One of them detached itself from the others, flew nearer and, in silence, scarce moving its wings, circled above us. An old man whispered: “ It might be the soul of the dead. Thus they hover till they pass the bridges.”

The last sentence is reminiscent of the ancient idea of the soul's taking on the form of a bird, in which guise it wanders about and visits the places known to it in life. Naturally, it haunts first its own dwelling. Therefore, for three consecutive nights after burial the peasants are careful to put out for the deceased, on the very spot in the house where his body was laid, a vessel of wine or water

## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

and a cake. This fact points to the folk-belief in the preservation of the soul's individuality and, to a certain extent, of its continued earthly needs. What this belief is may be dimly apprehended from the following Roumanian folk-story.

Death once came to take away a man who was very unwilling to go, and who begged successfully to be allowed to live a little longer. After a year Death appeared again, and now drove him forcibly away through the woods. He wept bitterly all the time and all the way. He looked at himself and said: "Oh, poor body, how I have nourished you, bathed you and clothed you, that I should now perish!" Thus he grieved; for outside the body, he thought, the soul could never live. They arrived thus at a great water. Here the man begged to drink once more. But, as he stooped, Death took his soul away. The body fell down in the mud.

It happened some time after that the soul was taken back to the same water by a guardian angel. The angel asked:

"Do you recognise what is there on the other bank?"

"No, my angel, it looks like a corpse."

"Let us cross!"

When they drew near, the soul was in mighty fear

## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

of its own former body. The angel said: "Now, enter it again!" The soul then began to cry aloud, praying not to be put back in the corpse. "Oh, how foolish I was, wishing to remain in it! How ugly it is, and how free am I now!"

The water in this tale reminds us of Acheron. Other pagan suggestions, coloured mostly by an Orphic influence, can be gathered from the funeral dirges. It is still the custom in Roumania for women to dress in black and chant beautiful improvised lamentations. One by one they approach the dead; seizing the occasion, they advise him as to the right path to take; they tell him of such things as a cool fountain under a great apple-tree in blossom, where he may enjoy resting a little and refreshing himself with a drink; for very hard and far-distant is the journey to the other world. Several sky-zones stretch out one above the other with their bridges and toll-houses, where malignant demons lie in wait to snatch the dead from his course.

But once arrived at his blessed, last abode, he does not altogether sever connection with those left behind. He returns sometimes in the shape of a snake or, according to a still stranger belief of the Macedonian Roumanians, in the guise of a spider. Both these creatures are looked upon by the folk

## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

with great awe. One would prefer to see the dead as his own self. In spite of the oft-repeated saying : “ ‘The dead with dead and the living with living,’ ”—when the departed is accompanied in solemn procession to the churchyard, the mourners bid him be mindful, not of the running rivers perishing in the sea, but of the sun that goes down and rises again. They even point out the most propitious days for such visits. Some of the dirges expressly say :

“ Come, dear one, at All Souls ; for the day is then long  
And you have time to commune with us.”

The feast of All Souls falls on Whit Sunday, when people go to the cemetery after the church service. It is both touching and picturesque to catch a glimpse of the scene on such an occasion : groups of women in black amidst clouds of burning incense and lighted candles ; rich tributes of flowers, especially roses, laid on the graves ; offerings of drink and food, chiefly a dish of boiled grain. In Macedonia they also bring a special cake covered with walnut and rose leaves.

But the most characteristic feature among the Roumanians everywhere is the display of variously shaped rose-bedecked pots. These take us back to the Roman *Rosalia*—hence our own *Rusalii*. This term, I suppose, has passed from the Latin—





VILLAGE CEMETERY.

(See page 42.)



HOBBY-HORSE DANCERS AT A FAIR.

(See page 47.)



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speaking element in the Balkans to the Byzantines and to the Slavs. It does not follow, however, that the festival itself originated in Italy and nowhere else. For to the present day certain regions of Thrace are famous for the growing of roses; and when they are in flower it is an enchanting experience to journey down the Struma Valley towards ancient Philippi. Great rose-gardens lie on all sides, as they did once in bygone times, when the perfumed beauty of the rose, no doubt, predominated in the Orphic mysteries, with their central belief in immortality. The rose-festival has even left a number of tokens on the funeral monuments.

As more significant I would mention a Greek inscription of A.D. 138, discovered in Histria, Dobrudja—a region famous for the immigration of Thracian colonists, called Bessi, who may have brought hither the Dionysian rites. It tells of one Artemidor, donor of a thousand dinars to the council of elders in Histria “for the adorning with roses” (*εἰς ῥοδισμόν*).<sup>1</sup> For this purpose special, richly-endowed associations were also formed, which are again testified to by numerous inscriptions, all showing how highly the *Rosalia* were esteemed in the eyes of the people. The rose was a fitting symbol of life's brief span; and, as in its fading the

<sup>1</sup> Vasile Pârvan, *Țara Noastră*, p. 101, București, 1923.

## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

rose kept some of its perfume, so did the remembrance of the departed endure. They were invoked and prayed to share with the living the food and drink brought over—a strange repast this of life and death together, considered as two aspects of the same endless, unknown process.

Identical scenes are witnessed nowadays at our own feast of All Souls, savouring often of too much jollity. But we have to remember that the revels of Dionysos were also held at the Greek *Anthesteria*—essentially a festival of the Dead. This feast lasted for three days, one of which was considered unlucky; for then it was that ghosts went about, and by way of protection people used to chew buckthorn.<sup>1</sup>

This side of the *Anthesteria* is also reflected in our *Rusali*. A number of malignant spirits, bearing the name of the feast itself, haunt the place, ready for every kind of mischief. They are generally figured in the shape of three female divinities. Once upon a time, so runs a rather simple tradition, they were three damsels at the court of Alexander the Great. When the Emperor gave his horse drink from a bottle of living water, they drank too; and so they became immortal. Another tradition says that deep resentment embitters them

<sup>1</sup> See Jane E. Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, pp. 39-40, Cambridge, 1922.

## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

against mankind; for, when maidens in their former life, they were not paid sufficient attention. And thus to-day at the *Rusali* they wander about, chiefly round the fountains and the crossways, raise whirlwinds and sing to lure folk to their doom.



HOBBY-HORSE.

As protection against them, people are warned to hang on the doors or windows a bunch of worm-wood or to wear it in the belt. Some other plants can also be used with good effect, such as lovage and hedge-hyssop.

But the highest magic power is possessed by the Hobby-horse dancers, whose chief characteristic

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feature is being grouped into a sort of brotherhood under a leader to initiate them. As to how this initiation is managed, I will mention two of the most important proceedings.

At early morning the dancers meet out in the country at a certain mound at the crossways. Here the leader raises his sword and crosses it with the club of one of the dancers. Under sword and club a sculptured horse's head is shown. Then, all together, to a special bagpipe tune known as the sunrise-song, they dance three times round the mound. In some parts of Roumania the dancers meet at nine boundaries, and fill a jug with water from nine springs, halting at the far side of the crossways. The leader then ties a garter of bells to the ankles of each dancer. Then in a circle, whilst the leader sprinkles them with the water brought from the nine springs, they all pray to a certain Irodeasa, supposed to be their guardian goddess. Afterwards, during the dancing, whenever they are offered drinks, they empty their first glass out as a libation to this Irodeasa.

In both methods of initiation there are a number of striking elements, of which let me mention for the present only that of the flag-making. The dancers cut a pole from the woods, and decorate its upper end with multi-coloured ribbons; they also attach



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to it a handkerchief with wormwood and garlic—sure charms against evil spirits. That the flag itself has a magic purpose is seen by the fact that it is thrown into the river after the nine-day's dance.

When all preparations are completed, the dancers go round the streets from village to village, all attired in their best national costumes, with such additional adornments as laces, flowers and many bells. They must always be in odd numbers, from seven to eleven, and include the following principal characters, besides the leader :

(1) A Flag-bearer. (2) A Dumb Dancer, so called on account of his keeping silent during the dance. He often wears a mask, and dresses in accordance with his part, corresponding to that of the English Fool. He also carries, like the leader, a sword or a whip, which he lashes round the dancers to scare away the spirits. (3) A Hobby-horse—that is, a wooden horse's head borne by a dancer and entirely or partly hidden under a kind of framework. Rarely seen to-day, it must once have been general.

In addition, we learn from old records that another animal, usually a goat, was likewise represented, a relic of which is still to be observed in the form of a hare-skin fixed on a piece of wood to

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resemble a beak, and displayed by one of the men. As for the dancing itself, the strangeness of the figures, which are now and again accompanied by a brandishing of clubs, is really surprising.

At a certain point the dance turns into acting. The leader touches with his sword one of the dancers, who at once feigns dizziness and falls down. All then gather round and exchange remarks to show that the dancer is dead. Accordingly they take him away a short distance, one or two performers being left behind to lament him; and the dancing resumes when the supposed dead man comes to life again.

The last scene here carries us back to that world-wide god of death and resurrection—in our case no other than Dionysos. It is well known that this god was worshipped by various associations, which, under the name of Kouretes in Crete, Korybantes in Phrygia, Salii in Italy, Satyrs in Thrace, constituted special colleges endowed with magical virtues. They enacted, mostly in pantomimic dances, the life-story of their hero, who, being connected with the idea of fertility, had passed through many and various shapes, from a humble tree-spirit to the splendour of a sun-god. It is to this latter that we found our dancers devoting their initial dance, as the Korybantes once did, and



GIPSY DANCER AND FLOWER-SELLER.

From a painting by Luchian.

(See page 27.)



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were for this reason called by Strabo "Children of the Sun."

Dionysos was also closely associated with a mother-goddess, who is represented on many vases as rising out of an earthen mound. I think it is her own shadow that lingers still in the Roumanian *Irodeasa*, mentioned above, together with sprinkling of water, libations, dancing in a circle round a mound at cross-ways; for all of these particulars entered into the ancient Dionysian religious practices. To the water-rite particularly Euripides refers in the *Bacchæ*, which I mention for the reason that it so vividly reflects a form of worship practised by women—the Mænads. In the *Descriptio Moldaviæ*, a book of the Roumanian historian Cantemir of the eighteenth century, moreover, the following passage refers to the Hobby-horse dancers:

"They dress like women; on their heads they put crowns of wormwood leaves and flowers. They speak in a thin, feminine voice and, in order not to be recognised, cover their faces with white veils."

Now what was the meaning of all this? Were the dancers, without being aware of it, trying to impersonate the ancient Mænads, as to-day they impersonate the male followers of Dionysos—the



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half-horse, half-men Satyrs? There is certainly no better explanation. Out of the motley crowd of Dionysian worshippers it is the Satyr-element that has prevailed in our own survival, and left behind, as it were a symbol, the hobby-horse, and its very name as well, derived as it is from the Roumanian *căl-uș*, little horse, and the suffix *-ar*—*călușar*.

This contention of mine becomes clearer when compared with the same custom as practised by the Roumanians of Macedonia. Here it occurs in winter, between New Year's Day and Epiphany, a period dreaded for the appearance of Callicanzari—monstrous creatures, vaguely conceived as half-men, half-beasts, no doubt the counterpart of the *Rusalii* in Roumania. There is a complete similarity of name—*aluguciar*, the Roumanian for “little horse,” being replaced by the Greek *alogo* with the diminutive *uciu*.

The organisation of the Hobby-horse dancers consists of small or large bodies, never in even numbers. Each member goes about with a club or a wooden sword, except two of them who carry real swords—the leader and the so-called *bubușar*. May not this last term come from *babutzus*, the Byzantine *babutzicarius*, meaning “mad,” “fool”? My interpretation would perfectly suit his part;



## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

for this character wears a skin mask, a peasant cloak and numerous bells round his waist, and his task is to make as much noise as he possibly can.

Other leading characters are : (4) A bridegroom. (5) Someone in feminine attire, representing the bride. (6) A doctor, in the sense of a primitive magician. (7) A woman with a doll in her arms, supposed to be her baby. (8) A man with blackened face. (9) A few others, masked as goats, bears and so forth. It is clear that such disguises are made to serve some other purpose than a simple dance. Indeed, they go with a mumming drama.

The man with the black face tries either to steal the baby doll or to pay improper attentions to the bride, which infuriates the bridegroom. A combat follows. The bridegroom is killed ; and, while he is being lamented, the doctor intervenes and brings him back to life. There is even a more complete version of the performance. The baby doll seems to have something supernatural about it. Suddenly, as in fairy tales, he grows into a young man and wishes to get married. A bride is found for him, and a priest also appears for the wedding, when a quarrel ensues between the two protagonists, the rest proceeding as above : the bridegroom is killed,

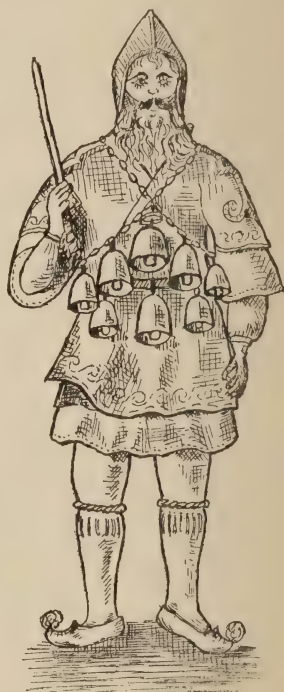
## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

then restored to life, and all ends happily in a merry dance.

Here we have the ancient god of fertility in a



CĂLUȘAR.



ALUGUCIAR, HIGHLANDS  
OF MACEDONIA.

regular folk-play, which, containing all the elements of a Dionysian ritual, has survived down the centuries ; for it has always possessed magical intention and been in keeping as well with the taste of the

## THE HOBBY-HORSE DANCE

people. Both the dancing and the queer disguises have helped them to forget themselves, taken them away from every-day life and restrictions and brought them closer to nature, plunging them into rapturous joy, such as one might catch an echo of in the beautiful lines of Euripides :

“ And all the mountain felt  
And worshipped with them, and the wild things knelt  
And ramped and gloried, and the wilderness  
Was filled with moving voices and dim stress.” <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Gilbert Murray's translation of the *Bacchæ*.

Since the above appeared in the *Quest*, I came into touch with Percy Maylam's *Hooden Horse*, Canterbury, 1909. The description in it, as well as the photographs of hobby-horse forms used until very recently in East Kent, show a manifest similarity and identity of origin with the Roumanian custom.

## V

### ST. JOHN'S EVE

FROM very ancient days the twenty-fourth of June, being the Summer Solstice, impressed the people to the extent of celebrating it by various festivals. These, naturally, in course of time disappeared altogether in some countries; in others, however, traces of them still linger, and, though associated with St. John the Baptist, are entirely pagan and no doubt of a highly interesting order. I am acquainted with many such old remnants referring to Midsummer; but I find them nowhere so thoroughly upheld as amongst the retired, out-of-the-way Roumanians in Macedonia. And, as the latter have not yet been given due attention, I thought that in dealing with them I might also bring forward some suggestions towards the explanation Sir James Frazer tries to arrive at in *The Golden Bough*.

In order to trace back the custom I am going to relate, I shall compare it first to the same one as practised in Greece, the land of classical tradition.

## ST. JOHN'S EVE

A traveller, Sonnini de Magnoncourt, in his book *Voyage en Grèce et en Turquie*, published more than a century ago, tells us that on St. John's Eve the girls form themselves into parties and send a boy to fetch water from the spring. With this water, known as ἀμίλητο νερό—because the bearer is not allowed to speak on the way—they fill a vessel, into which every one of them drops an apple. The vessel is covered and left for the night in the open air. The following day each girl takes her own apple out of it; and then, among other things, after having washed her hands with the water, they go out into the road, where the first name heard by chance is considered as that of the future husband.

Now, this is one of the methods of divination very usual in antiquity. It is mentioned, for instance, in the *Odyssey*, when the hero, in a beggar's disguise, accepts as of good omen some words uttered in his presence :

ὥς ἄρ' ἔφην, χαῖρεν δὲ κληδόνι δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.

“So they spoke, and goodly Odysseus gladdened in the presage.”<sup>1</sup>

This very term of κληδών, except for the shifting of the accent in κλήδονα, is applied in Greece to the custom of St. John's Day, which, though no

<sup>1</sup> Book XVIII, verse 117.

## ST. JOHN'S EVE

longer observed as described by the French traveller, still preserves a connection with the old superstitious way of fortune-telling. Nowadays, instead of apples, the girls throw into the vessel such tokens as rings, beads and the like. Afterwards, when the vessel is uncovered, the boy who fetched the water or one of the girls plunges the hand in and, drawing out the tokens one by one, recites or sings various couplets which have the power to predict every girl her good or bad luck.<sup>1</sup>

The ceremony of the *κλήδονα* is limited in Greece to family circles, and is more or less considered as an amusing game. But it is different with the Roumanians in Macedonia; here it assumes the form of a high festival, and there enter into it some new features which give the whole proceedings another character and significance. I shall describe the celebration as I often witnessed it myself in the village of Clisura, perched up on the top of a mountain, whence on clear days one can dimly see in the distance the abode of ancient gods.

On St. John's Eve the maidens as well as the young married women make up numerous parties and go out in search of a certain creeping plant. Whilst the woods and the meadows resound with

<sup>1</sup> Described at length by G. F. Abbot in his *Macedonian Folklore*, pp. 53-7, Cambridge, 1903.





SHEPHERD.

From a painting by H. Strâmbulescu.

(See page 63.)



## ST. JOHN'S EVE

their singing, each one puts a mark on that particular plant when found—ties it with a bit of red woollen thread and hides it under green leaves. At the same time they gather garlands of such flowers as sweet-scented melilot, amaranth and the aromatic blossoms of a plant. Returning home with these, they begin to prepare what is called the *găleata*. It consists of a brazen jug, beautifully ornamented with flowers, into which every one of them throws a trinket, mostly of silver coins. Now a procession is formed and the *găleata* is taken out; at the moment of starting the girls sing together a song :

“ Come along, my friends,  
To visit the fountains . . . ”

which is soon changed for another one, used when a bride leaves the house of her parents :

“ Look how beautiful she is, white and rosy like a high-born lady; look at her breast, how she seems like a chosen ram. . . . ”

The simile here might not appeal to many of my readers; but, I assure them, the silky whiteness of a ram on the high pastures is a thing worth being compared with.

As they pace on there follows a song which is special to the occasion :

## ST. JOHN'S EVE

"Where are you off, so bedecked, my little one, with your bridal veil and your gold-threads on, and your fingers full of rings, my beautiful one?"

"I go to my nine brothers—nine unmarried brothers . . ."

At the fountain a little boy, after throwing a coin into the trough, takes some water in the jug and throws it away three times, just as is customary at a wedding, whilst the others sing around:

"Fill, sister; empty, brother, to give water to the thirsty one. . . ."

They proceed to three fountains in turn, repeating the same performance, and return from the third one with water in the jug. Then comes the fastening of the *găleata* with a padlock and putting it to sleep, as they say. Next morning, before sunrise, the girls and young women, dressed in their best attire, go to fetch the plants which were marked and hidden on the previous evening. They twine these round their heads, being very good for the hair; hence the name *cusitză*, braid, of that plant. Afterwards they walk through the village from house to house with songs and merriment—every *găleata* being guarded by young men with drawn wooden swords, since there is manifest antagonism among the groups. In the evening they go through the

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process of taking out the trinkets as we have seen it done by the Greeks.<sup>1</sup>

Except for the common point of divination provided in this last part, one meets throughout the ceremony with a number of elements which need elucidation.

First, the gathering of plants. It is a widespread superstition that on the twenty-fourth of June certain plants acquire a magic or supernatural power. These plants, of course, vary in different places. Thus, in France, most particularly associated with St. John's Day is the wormwood, to which the old French saying refers: "*Herbe Saint Jean, tu portes bonne rencontre.*" In Germany, the St. John's wort is considered efficacious against evil spirits, sometimes being termed on this account "*Fuga Daemonum.*" People in various parts of Spain used to collect vervain on St. John's Day; this and other flowers, Lockhart tells us in his *Spanish Ballads*, served to encircle the heads of young women early in the morning, and from the duration of the dew upon them, according as it remained a long or a short time, they could augur the constancy of their lovers.

<sup>1</sup> A description of the custom, as practised in Samarina, in the Pindus region, is given by A. J. B. Wace and M. S. Thompson in *Nomads of the Balkans*, pp. 130-2, London, 1914.

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Next, we have the coin thrown into the water and the locking of the *găleata*. Both become clearer if one considers what is done at a real wedding. On the Saturday night previous to the marriage ceremony the bride and bridegroom are conducted in two separate processions to the fountains. The parties might meet on the way, but each carries out its own task. On either side there is dancing and music; and, while the strong notes of the clarionet and the gentler ones of the lute and the deep sounds of the drum mingle with the uninterrupted songs, a jug is filled with water, after some coins have been cast in—filled and emptied three times at three successive fountains. The jug is then carried home and kept under padlock till Tuesday night, when the wedded pair come together. I inquired of the women why they do this. “You see,” they answered smilingly, “we lock up the spells”—in the Vlach dialect “*inclidem amăghili*”—from the Greek *μαγεία*, magic, which, of course, can endanger and prevent any wedlock joys.

I mentioned above a little boy in relation to the fountain procedure. He goes by the name of *fărtat*, and his is an interesting part, which I remember to have played once myself. Being on the man's side, I was supposed to help him somehow even in his courting. While still affianced he could not visit



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his dear one alone—I had to be present myself. I felt now and again unconsciously embarrassed ; but grown-up people, who knew things better, whispered into my ears not to heed those two much, and try to amuse myself by looking out of the windows, by watching the flies around or by stealing out of the room for one or two minutes. In some of the nomad sections of the Roumanians it is this boy who goes with the whole singing company to fill the jug at the fountains. One of his essentials is to have both parents alive. In this as well as in other characteristics he bears a resemblance to what many literary, pictorial and sculptural monuments of yore represent to us in the guise of Eros. Such, for instance, as that picturesque, beautifully sounding description of Aristophanes in the *Birds* :

ὁ δ' ἀμφιθαλὴς Ἔρως  
 χρυσόπτερος ἡνίας  
 εὔθυνε παλιντόνους,  
 Ζηνὸς πάροχος γάμων  
 τῆς τ' εὐδαίμονος Ἥρας.

The first epithet, ἀμφιθαλής, has the meaning of one deprived of neither his father nor his mother ; the translation then would be :

“And, happy in having both his parents living, the golden-winged Eros held firm the reins and drove the wedding-car of Zeus and blessed Hera.”

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On a sarcophagus in the Villa Borghese the same Eros figures as a guide of Hades, carrying down his ravished bride, the daughter of Demeter; on a cameo in the Vatican, Dionysos drives away with his Ariadne in a brightly decked chariot, on the top of which stands Eros; and in many a vase-painting one again finds Eros showing a beautiful youth the way towards the goddess of the underworld.<sup>1</sup> All these in one form or another, bringing together Hades and Kore, Dionysos and Ariadne, Persephone and Adonis, embody the old and deeply significant conception of a mystical union between mortals and deities, which was the foundation of the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries. And I recall them because they have a direct bearing upon my subject. Indeed, you did not fail to notice how from beginning to end the ceremony I have described is strikingly identical with that of a regular wedding. The flower-crowned *găleata* stands for the bride; nay, in some Roumanian villages a girl is dressed up as a bride and it is she who carries the *găleata* and goes through all the details of a wedding ceremony. To whom is she married? What is he like, this supposed but unseen bridegroom? In the song I mentioned, when the question is put to her:

<sup>1</sup> See J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion*, pp. 597-602, Cambridge, 1910.

## ST. JOHN'S EVE

“Where are you off so bedecked, my little one? . . .”

the answer comes :

“I go to my nine brothers—nine unmarried brothers.”

The words reach us like a whisper from a bygone, veiled past ; those nine figures belong to a shadowy world of folk-tales and ballads. One more reason to ask whether there is not in the whole marriage here a symbolical sense attached to other times. We know that on Midsummer Day a rather rough festival was held by the people in Rome to celebrate the love between the goddess Fortuna and the legendary King Servius Tullius ;<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, in Athens the wedding of the Archon's wife to Dionysos, the wine god, was solemnised every year in the latter's temple. The doctrine underlying these and other similar practices and connecting them with the Eleusinian rites still survives in Roumanian popular tradition, as revealed in the ballad of *Mioritza*. A little black ewe—the pet of the flock—discloses to her master the secret that two of his associates have planned to kill him. The shepherd does not seem to take any measures to prevent the murder. In a mood of resigned

<sup>1</sup> Ovid, *Fasti*, VI, 775–84. The same character is somehow preserved in Avdela, a village of the Pindus. Men assemble here in the market-place, one of them is travestied into a bride, made to ride a donkey, whilst the others follow with shouts, merriment and rifle-shots.

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fatalism he only gives instructions as to what is to be done if he dies. He wishes to be buried by the sheep-fold, and near to his head are to be placed his three flutes—the flute of birch-wood, the flute of bone and the flute of reeds—so that the wind blowing through them may strike forth sweet melodies. Further, he does not want it to be known that he was murdered, and so he says to his little dark ewe :

“ But thou, do not tell them of the murder ; tell them only that I have married a beautiful Queen, the bride of the world ; that at my wedding a star fell. The sun and the moon held my chaplets. For wedding guests I had the fir trees and the aspens. For priests, the lofty mountains ; the birds for minstrels—thousands of birds, and the stars for torches ! ”

“ Iar tu de omor  
Să nu le spui lor.  
Să le spui curat,  
Că m'am însurat  
Cu-o mândnă crăiasă,  
A lumii mireasă ;  
Că la nunta mea  
A căzut o stea ;  
Soarele și luna  
Mi-au ținut cununa.  
Brazi și pălținași  
I-am avut nuntași ;  
Preoți, munții mari  
Pășări, lăutari,  
Pășărele mii  
Și stele făclii ! ”





FAIRY-TALE.

From a painting by Kimon Loghi.

(See page 70.)



## ST. JOHN'S EVE

Both in richness of imagery and in the choice of words making for exquisite cadences, these lines are among the highest of literary folk-creations. One catches in them something far beyond a fictitious story—the innermost meaning of the Eleusinian legends. The mystic nuptials, in which all nature takes a share, are but those of death's goddess with Adonis, himself a youth of lonely pastures, very beautiful withal, just as our ballad hero, about whom we are told that his face is white as the "froth of milk," his hair dark as "the plume of the raven," his eyes "like blackberries."

What is given here in the form of narrative verse is dramatically enacted in the festival of *găleata*. The ballad represents the wedded union of a goddess with a mortal youth; the festival that of a mortal maiden with a god, be he Dionysos or any of the other deities who have not yet lost touch with us. They might have changed their names, but not their essential nature. With unimpeached desires they continue to love, and are happy to be loved by, human creatures whose ways they haunt. In the deep green woods, near the cool fountains, in the grassy valleys and meadows, gods and goddesses still appear and sing, and dance and keep long revels. Their world is closed to ours, a boundary line hardly exists, and we can cross over and approach them; but, of course, let us proceed in the spirit

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of old, with more of a simple impulse than of bookish wisdom. As reason and cold argument could not avail one here, I shall try, by means of direct intuition, to give a glimpse of that world, as I caught it myself when wandering with my fellow-drivers.

We had halted on the edge of one of the primæval forests the other side of the Saraghiol plain, in Macedonia. On the hill-tops here the nights are cold, and, although the drivers had lit a fire, I trembled—scared at this hour of silence at the unusual appearances of things, while many unintelligible whispers floated through the night from the streams, from the foliage, from all nature sunk to rest. The sky was absolutely serene. The light overhead was like a white sheet, against which the shadows of the mountains were scarcely visible.

“Look there,” said the voice of a driver, “on the hill where many lights burn and flicker. That is Clisura. Here is Mount Vitchu, and the rock lower down is Kiatra Schuligan. One might take it for a vulture, mightn’t one? A large, large bird . . .”

“It resembles more a giant lying in ambush.”

“It is a giant. Many people are frightened when they see it in the distance. More especially because below the rock there opens up an abyss,

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black and deep, whence can be heard all through the night now bursts of merriment, now laughter drowned in sobs, terrible roars and sometimes the sound of pipes and the beating of drums—yes, yes, the beating of innumerable drums.”

“How marvellous!”

“And once, one night, what did not my eyes see! From the depths there seemed to come forth monsters: one, two, three—numbers glided past, with long necks outstretched, from which hung bells that went glunguru-glunguru, glunguru-glunguru, as the beasts stumbled along. . . . What do you think? They were Callicanzari.”

The driver ceased talking and seated himself by his companions. I saw they were all tired, and lay upon the ground, their sun-burned faces looking like bronze in the light of the flames. They exchanged a few words, sighing, and again a long silence followed, until one said:

“Do you notice it? This forest makes one drowsy, as though one might sleep and never wake again.”

Indeed, the dark, damp thicket seemed to exhale something heavy into the air, a narcotic scent of plants, of bitter weeds.

“See well to it,” added the driver, “that we do not fall asleep and let the fire die out. God keep

## ST. JOHN'S EVE

us! Much may happen, especially as we are not yet past midnight, and when we are so near to the Fairies' Spring."

"What?" I asked, surprised.

"Do you not know it? A famous spring which runs through three mouths, all of stone."

"I have heard talk of it. There is a great deal said about it. It may be true or it may not."

"Go some time and see it. It is full of white kerchiefs around, of coloured threads, of tresses of hair, of coins and other things. Sick folk come daily, women and girls and children; they come before sunrise, bringing gifts, with basil and sweet cakes in their hands, they kneel and begin:

' My beautiful and white nymphs,  
If I have erred  
And I have distressed you . . . '

And the water boils. The drops splash and fall and play and murmur. And all around grow ferns tall and thick, and grass-like reeds; no one treads them down. There are many willows besides, with small and glossy leaves, and stems of ivy, long trails hanging among the branches and coiling like serpents."

The driver remained lost in thought. Then, lowering his voice:

"I know a boy who slept here; and the fairies

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came and wafted him into the air. A long time the boy was borne thus, carried along as if by the wind, with eyes closed, not seeing where he went. And, believe me, the lad did not get off unharmed. After some days he passed away for ever."

The surrounding silence seemed troubled. From time to time there came cold puffs of air—from far away, out of the endless night, they passed by, and then the fire would flicker; sparks scattered around, and the forest, with its impenetrable, mysterious recesses, seemed alight. And yonder was the spring and the ivy writhing like a serpent, and the fairies—I seemed to see them gliding so lightly in white groups. One of us whispered:

"Very often they don't do any harm. They just come out and sing."

"Yes, they sing. I heard them myself in my young days, and what voices! . . ."

All were listening to the old driver with attention. Even the horses drew nearer and, while moving in and out of the shifting firelight, I could see, as in a dream, pairs of legs, a flame-flashed head or a golden mane of silk.

## VI

### THE SACRED MARRIAGE—I

IN the preceding pages I have tried to connect some of the customs and superstitions relating to Midsummer with the ancient Eleusinian mysteries. I shall now further pursue the subject in order to see how far the fundamental conception of the same mysteries enters into both the framework and the texture of Roumanian folk-tales—a limited cycle which refers to the union of mortals with nymphs.

These latter are generally known in Roumanian by the name of *zâne*. Though in many points very similar to the Celtic fairies, they differ from them in being always represented, not in diminutive form, but in full stature; therefore, to avoid confusion, I call them nymphs.

Without a doubt, of all supernatural creatures they are the most appealing to one's imagination as well as to one's deeper impulses. People believe in nymphs, whose fascinating ivory-white beauty haunts any of the retired woodland springs or fountains. I know myself of such a fountain. In



## THE SACRED MARRIAGE

the highlands of Macedonia near the village of Clissura, following a path to the forest one hears the sound of its water, hidden as it is and arched by birch trees. It runs through three stone mouths, and all around one sees ferns, plants with narcotic scents, trails of ivy, while close above it there opens a little grassy lawn. Here the nymphs hold their revels, and are sometimes willing to bestow upon a mortal the favour of beholding their divine beauty. I often heard about a young shepherd called Gógu. He played his pipe so exquisitely that the nymphs used to gather round and dance and incite him with their merry voices :

“ Play, Gógu, for us to dance,  
The youngest nymph we'll give you ! ”

Whether they kept their promise I cannot tell. This remains but a fragment in my mind, as does another scrap of a story. A young shepherd—it might have been the same one—fell deeply in love with the little sister of the nymphs. Night after night he would lie in hiding to gaze on her when she glided towards the fountain and, taking off her fingers the jewelled rings, counted them over to herself: “ One ring, two rings, three rings . . . ” I seem to hear still the far-distant, dream-like whisper of these words as they were uttered many a time by my grandmother. “ One ring, two rings,

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three rings . . .” Their very sound worked like a spell to throw wide open the wonder gate of fairyland, where to this day so many perplexingly marvellous creatures, things and happenings throng together that I can hardly detach myself enough to reduce to a few simple elements the tale with which I am here concerned.

The nymph with the rings is replaced by many others. There is a clear pool now instead of a fountain. And the nymphs dance on, clad in soft, white raiment. They put off the garments, one by one, and there for a moment they stand in their uncovered loveliness, their rich, golden hair shining in the moonlight, then spring into the pool. No sooner are they out of sight bathing than the young shepherd emerges from his hiding-place and seizes the garments of the nymph of whom he is enamoured. Thus did a wise woman counsel him: “Keep watch, and if thou canst steal the garment it is sure to get her too.” The other nymphs, indeed, came out of the pool, robed themselves, and departed; but what could the youngest sister do save yield to the shepherd’s embrace? They were wedded, and the nymph, though resigned to her fate, wistfully sought an opportunity of slipping away to her own free world. Now it happened once to be a great festival, and they both went and danced—as mortals

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are used to dance. And the people who knew her looked at each other, wondering: "Why does she not dance the enchanting airy dances of the fairies?" And the nymph said: "How can I when I have not my own raiment?" They all longed to see her dance, so they prevailed upon the shepherd to give it back to her this once. But scarcely had she laid hold of it when she soared into the air and vanished.

This is the usual version of the tale as found among the Vlachs in Macedonia. It has a parallel in Roumania, under the title of *Ion Buzdugan*,<sup>1</sup> and with slight differences it is spread all over the Balkans.

It is to be observed that the hero is described in most of the variants as a handsome young shepherd, and also as a master-player on the flute, just like Adonis or Attis, beloved of the goddess in the ancient mysteries. On the other hand, our nymph seems to retain her superhuman power only by means of her garment; without it she might be at the mercy of any mortal. A certain analogy to this incident of the garment-stealing is to be found in one of the legends of Aphrodite's numerous love affairs. The fair queen of beauties was bathing

<sup>1</sup> *Basme*, by I. C. Fundescu, pp. 89-96, București, 1896.

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once in the River Achelous. Hermes saw her, and could not resist the temptation; a god himself, of many devices, and a celestial messenger, he sent an eagle to carry off her dress, and so Aphrodite had to submit to his passion, the result of which was Hermaphrodite—a strange embodiment of both sexes.

Instead of the raiment in the different versions of the nymph tale, one meets simply with a kerchief, veil or scarf, all possessed of the same magic qualities. For an equivalent to this, one has to remember the use made of it by Homer in a passage where Odysseus, on the point of being drowned, is presented by the goddess Ino with a veil, ἄμβροτον, immortal, as she calls it:

“Take this veil and stretch it beneath thy breast. It is immortal; there is no fear that thou shalt suffer aught or perish.”<sup>1</sup>

As happens in many of the olden myths, in our tale also the nymph wears now and again the shape of an animal when first encountering her lover. Thus in a Vlach version, *The Prince and the Fairy Queen of the Fairies*, she is a hind, but how wonderful:

<sup>1</sup> Book V, verses 346–7. A. T. Murray's translation in the Loeb Library.

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“There was a young prince who loved to go a-hunting. One day he got up very early, and with his faithful companions he set off for the chase. At the entrance of the forest they separated, each going his own way. The prince took a middle path, and looking ahead he saw a hind too beautiful for words to express. It had round its neck a string of pearls and on each of its four legs, just below the knee, a golden filigree bracelet. Seeing such beauty, the prince was seized with pity and wished to catch it alive. He rushed hither and thither, but all his efforts were in vain. At last, when he succeeded with his companions in surrounding it on all sides, the hind threw itself into a pool. The prince and his men went up to the pool and stood there waiting. The daylight faded and twilight fell and they never moved their eyes from the pool. At midnight, as they were tired out, sleep overtook them one after the other. When they woke up they saw there, instead of the pool, a palace glittering like the morning sun. The prince very nearly lost his reason because of the surprise which overwhelmed him. Drawing towards the palace he found all the doors wide open. He entered, went upstairs and saw a large room decorated with the most precious things. And, when he walked in, what did his eyes encounter ! A royal throne, and on the throne a damsel of about sixteen ; around her were some dozen damsels, all standing with their hands crossed on their breasts. The damsel seated on the throne said to him : “ Youth ! Why do you look at me so breathlessly ? Do you not know me ? I am the hind of yesterday. It was I whom you pursued the whole day, and it was I who then threw myself into the pool. I am a fairy and the queen of the fairies.”

In two other stories of the kind, given by P. Ispirescu, the nymph takes the form of a tortoise



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and of an owl. The latter, as shown by the very title, *The Fairy of the Fairies*, reminds one of Diana, both in character and in her being followed by a train of six more nymphs. The story runs thus :

Three brothers, the sons of a king, shot arrows in order to find wives wherever the arrow of each one should alight. The eldest brother's arrow fell into the palace of a neighbouring emperor, the middle son's into the house of a nobleman, whilst that of the youngest prince flew towards the sky and dropped far away into a wild forest. He went to look for the arrow and, when he took hold of it, suddenly an owl clung to his shoulder, attended by six other owls. They all returned home with him. It was night then, and the prince fell asleep. And what amazement seized him the next morning ! There close to him lay a damsel exceedingly fair, and near the bed six more damsels. In a corner of the room were cast the owl skins, which every night afterwards they used to shake off from their lovely bodies. Soon, at the wedding of the eldest brother, the seven nymphs arrived unexpectedly and joined in the dance. The prince was overjoyed and proudly happy, for no woman in the world could compare with his fairy bride. At the wedding of the second brother the nymph again appeared, and then in the midst of the feasting, what an awful idea entered the prince's head ! He ran into his room, snatched up the owl skins and threw them into the fire. At once a stir arose among the guests. One of the nymphs said : " There is danger about ! " Another : " Something is burning ! " " We are lost ! " cried all. Whereupon they rushed up into the air, turned into seven doves and flew away.

In some versions of this tale, pervaded with a greater sense of beauty, the seven owls are replaced by seven white birds ; and in direct relation to



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them one finds two incidents which occur very often, either separately or woven together in the plot.

First, the incident of the golden apples. In the garden of an emperor there is a wondrous apple tree that bears fruit entirely of gold, but no sooner do they ripen than in the middle of the night they disappear. The emperor is grieved at heart to the point of giving up his throne to solve the mystery. Two of his sons watch in turn, but with no avail; the youngest son succeeds at last in catching sight of the seven nymphs, who come in the guise of seven birds and steal the golden apples. The incident is given much space in a popular Roumanian book, *The Story of the Most Handsome Arghir and Ilena*. In English it is used in a somewhat changed form—instead of the stolen apples the grass being strangely trodden down—by William Morris in *The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon*.

Then there is the incident of the forbidden chamber. An emperor, before leaving, gives his son a bunch of keys and tells him: "Thou hast my permission to open all the chambers of the palace, except the one which unlocks with the golden key." When the son is left alone he cannot refrain from entering that particular chamber, where he gets a glimpse of the enchanting fairy realm.

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Both incidents are found in the old and to-day very scarce Arabian romance of *Seyf Zu-l-Yezen* ; but with a far greater mastery they are wrought into the *Story of Hasan of El-Basrah*, which opens a vista of unmatched beauty of the same kind. Hasan, having passed through the forbidden door, comes to a pool in a pavilion, where he sees the birds approaching :

They alighted upon a great, beautiful tree, and they went around it: and he saw among them a great and beautiful bird, the handsomest among them; and the rest encompassed it, attended it as servants; whereat Hasan wondered. That bird began to peck the nine others with its bill, and to behave proudly towards them, and they fled from it, while Hasan stood diverting himself with the sight of them from a distance. Then they seated themselves upon the couch, and each of them rent open its skin with its talons, and came forth from it; and, lo, it was a dress of feathers. There came forth from the dresses ten damsels, virgins, who shamed by their beauty the lustre of the moon; and when they had divested themselves, they all descended into the pool, and washed, and proceeded to play and to jest together;—the bird who surpassed the others throwing them down and plunging them in, and they fleeing from her, and unable to put forth their hands to her. When Hasan beheld her, he lost his reason, and his mind was captivated, and he knew that the damsels forbade him not to open the door save on this account. He became violently enamoured of her by reason of what he beheld of her beauty and loveliness and her stature and justness of form, while she was sporting and jesting and they were sprinkling one another with the water

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Hasan stood looking at them, sighing that he was not with them; his mind was perplexed by the beauty of the young damsel, his heart was entangled in the snare of her love, and he had fallen into the snare: the eye was looking, and in the heart a fire was burning; for the soul is prone to evil.<sup>1</sup>

Hasan then manages to steal the feather dress, which he hides; but later she gets possession of it and departs from him.

This turning of the story into a dramatic separation, here as well as in all the versions mentioned above, is brought about through the regaining of the object in which lies the nymph's supernatural power. She is anxious to fly from a world where one has in a way compelled her to live. But there is another side of the story, when the same separation comes through the breaking of a compact between the lovers. A typical example of the latter is the well-known mediæval romance of Melusine:

Raymond, Count of Lusignan, while roaming in the woods of Colombiers in Poitou, met with three fairies, one of whom was Melusine. Her rare beauty won his love at once, and he wished to marry her. She consented on condition that Raymond should never see her naked, or, according to another version, should never intrude upon her on

<sup>1</sup> Ed. W. Lane's translation of *The Arabian Nights*, Vol. III, p. 373, London, 1883.

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a Saturday. A spell had been laid on Melusine to become a serpent every Saturday from the hips downwards. After having spent some time together, Raymond, stirred to jealousy by the Saturday retirements of Melusine, concealed himself and surprised her bathing. Thus, the covenant being transgressed, Melusine has to leave him for ever.

It is a matter of philosophical reflection how many things in the world are presented under a prohibitive or restrictive form first to excite one's desire and then to make one suffer for having submitted to their irresistible attraction. The fact springs, no doubt, from a deep-rooted human characteristic, which is expressed in countless different stories going far back into remotest antiquity. Such a one is found in the *Rigveda*, the sacred hymn-book of the Brahmans. It records the love intercourse of Urvashi, a sort of nymph, with a mortal Pururavas, to whom she says: "Embrace me three times a day, but never against my will, and let me never see you without your royal garments, for this is the manner of women." Pururavas does not regard the warning and she returns to her fairy world.

Andrew Lang, commenting on this story,<sup>1</sup> contends that it evolved out of a need to illustrate a taboo, an infringement of a nuptial etiquette, which

<sup>1</sup> *Custom and Myth*, pp. 70-8, London, 1884.





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might have existed side by side with various others ; to take, for instance, a simple one—the husband and wife refraining from uttering each other's name. Herodotus speaks of the women of some Ionian colonists, who made it their custom, which they bequeathed to their daughters, that none should ever call her husband by his name :

μηδὲ οὐνόματι βῶσαι τὸν ἐωντῆς ἄνδρα.<sup>1</sup>

To this day, among a section of the Vlachs in Macedonia, the wives do not pronounce their husband's names ; in referring to them, they always use the third pronominal person : “ *He* said so, *he's* done so . . .” This, of course, suggests to-day rather a turn of amorous bashfulness, but it might have once been a taboo. I therefore think Andrew Lang's theory acceptable ; not entirely, however : it does not cover the whole ground. There are tales where one is inclined to look for a higher meaning than the sanction of a custom. In *The Prince and the Fairy-Queen of the Fairies*, when the time comes for the nymph and the prince “to make one couple,” as the story puts it, she says to him : “Thou must give me thy word of honour that whatever thou beholdest with thine eyes, whether good or bad, thou wilt never think thyself

<sup>1</sup> Book I, 146.

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entitled to ask ; and thou wilt never think, either, that thou hast the right to judge the things thou seest with thy eyes ; but thou must always feign that thou hast neither understood nor heard, if thou desirest that we should dwell together. For, if thou dost not do as I tell thee, then we must live apart and must never see each other again. But thou must know that fairies never do anything evil." The prince agreed. They had a son. Not long after, the nymph one day clapped her hands, and there appeared a Lamia—that is, a female monster—whom she ordered : " Take this child out of my sight ! " Then she gave birth to a daughter, and hardly two weeks had elapsed when she caused a fire to be lit, and therein, amidst the burning flames, the daughter was thrown. Could the prince say anything ? But, when finally she deprived of their provisions a whole army, sent by the prince to war, he broke out into angry words, whereupon the nymph forsook him.

This tale has a special importance, for, as far as I know, it is unique of the Melusine type in Roumanian folklore, and it bears a resemblance to a story found in *Mahabharata*. Among the heroes of the Sanscrit epic there is Brishma, the son of a certain King Santanu. The latter fell in love with a most beautiful damsel, who said that she was the

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River Ganges and could not possibly marry him except on condition that he would never inquire of her doings. To this he consented. The nymph bore him many children, all of whom she drowned in the river. Then Brishma was born. And the king, having implored her to spare at least this one's life, she suddenly changed into the River Ganges.<sup>1</sup>

Of no less interest is another tale belonging to the Vlachs of Macedonia. A prince encountered in the woods a she-goat, which was but a nymph. He knew it, for he had surprised her while taking off her skin to bathe in a pool. They wedded, and soon afterwards, notwithstanding her warning that whenever the goatskin should be lost he would lose her likewise, the prince burned it. At once she gave a piercing cry and turned into a spark which, rising up in the skies, became the Evening Star; the prince turned also into a spark, ran after her and became the Morning Star.

This looks more like a star legend linking up our nymph tale with the ancient Eleusinian rites. Both Evening Star and Morning Star are the planet Venus, identified with Astarte, and it was very likely the brilliant appearance of Venus that heralded in

<sup>1</sup> *The Science of Fairy Tales*, by Edwin Sidney Hartland, p. 317, London, 1925.

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various places the beginning of the Adonis festivals. Also Plutarch tells us, what he was himself told by the priests in Egypt, that Osiris as well as his bride-goddess Isis were changed into stars.

This is the only instance of the story ending there. All the other versions representing the union of a mortal with a nymph run into a second part. They seem to be more or less modelled upon *The Story of Hasan El-Basrah*. Here, when the nymph succeeds in getting back the feather dress, she says before her flight: "O mother of my husband, tell him when he comes, that if he wishes to meet me, he must leave his home . . ." In just the same circumstances the nymph in the Roumanian *Fairy of Fairies* tells her lover: "Until thou hast accomplished what no man in the world has ever accomplished, thou shalt not touch me"; while from the mouth of another nymph in a Vlach version one hears these rather puzzling words on her disappearance: "At the fountain of stone with the marble basin, there wilt thou find me."

Thenceforth the thread of this story is resumed and the wonders unfold themselves. We see the hero preparing for a long series of mighty adventures. He takes in his hand the iron staff of the wayfarer, puts on the iron sandals and forth he sets, through undreamt-of regions to the ends of the

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world, where no bird has ever flown, where the spaces are filled with unearthly voices and with far unearthly silences, devoid even of a breath of wind. And now and again there are winged horses that soar to the clouds; golden palaces springing up before one in the manner of baffling mirages; strange forests of which the boughs resound like so many strings of music; airy, creeping and wild-rambling things endowed with human speech. Amongst all these the lover passes on and, after surmounting numerous great obstacles, he at last reaches his goal by a device which is found in the typical *Story of Hasan El-Basrah* and recurs in most of the versions. As the hero strides along, he chances upon two youths who dispute with one another about a leather cap and a rod of brass. He interposes and asks them what is the cause of their contention.

“We are brothers,” said one of them. “Our father died and bequeathed us this cap and this rod. Each of them has a wonderful secret property. My brother says: ‘None shall take the rod but I!’ and I say: ‘None shall take it but I!’ So judge between us.”

He inquired: “What are the secret properties of these things?”

“Whoever puts the cap on his head,” they answered, “is concealed from the eyes of all people; as for the rod, whoever possesses it and strikes the ground with it, obtains command and authority over seven tribes of Jinns.”



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He then thought of a stratagem and said: "I will throw a stone, and he who reaches it first shall take the rod." Away went the stone, and after it ran the two youths; while he stuck the cap on his head and seized the rod, thus leaving them no object to quarrel about. In the Roumanian *Fairy of the Fairies*, besides the cap, one meets with a pair of sandals and a whip. Whoever puts on the cap becomes invisible to the devil himself; whoever wears the sandals walks on water just as on land; and whoever cracks the whip in front of his enemies turns them all into stones. In the tale of *Ion Buzdugan* we have a crown, a kerchief and a pair of sandals. The objects vary more or less from one version to another; but they are all possessed of the same magic virtues which enable the hero to fulfil his task and come face to face with his beloved nymph. She dwells in a realm apart, and it is essential for us to know whether her person is everlasting or not. Out of many classical references I will bring forward only two, as being quite clear and leaving no doubt on the matter. In the Homeric hymn *To Aphrodite* there is the beautiful passage on the nymphs:

αἶ ρ' οὔτε θνητοῖς οὔτ' ἀθανάτοισιν ἔποντε  
 δηρὸν μὲν ζῶουσι καὶ ἄμβροτον εἶδαρ ἔδουσι  
 καί τε μετ' ἀθανάτοισι καλὸν χορὸν ἐρρώσαντο.



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“They rank neither with mortals nor with immortals: long indeed they live, eating heavenly food and treading the lovely dance among immortals.”

Then a fragment of Hesiod is far more definite. It runs in translation :

“A chattering crow lives out nine generations of aged men, but a stag’s life is four times a crow’s and a raven’s life makes three stags old, while the phœnix outlives nine ravens, but we, the rich-haired Nymphs, daughters of Zeus the ægis-holder, outlive ten phœnixes.”<sup>1</sup>

According to these lines the length of a nymph’s life would amount to no less than about ten thousand years ; but what are they compared with eternity ? In this respect the mythological nymph appears to be different from our own nymph of the fairy-tale, who is rather a survival of both Diana and Venus. Like the two ancient goddesses, she stands for an ideal, transcendent loveliness ; when forced, therefore—through the stealing of her magic dress—to share someone’s passion, most anxious is she to free herself from the trammels of conventions, prejudices and incessant cares, in which we mortals move. The contrast between her divine self and the lover is too evident ; and, as a means of escaping it, she is made to advance conditions that one is sure to

<sup>1</sup> Hugh G. Evelyn-White’s translation in the Loeb Classical Library: *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homeric*, pp. 75 and 425.

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break ; or the rupture comes through her lover being unable to enter into her mysterious, higher purposes, such as the incident I mentioned of throwing her own child into the fire. Sometimes she only emerges before one's eyes as in a dream and vanishes ; but once perceived, her mere appearance is enough for one to be seized with an overwhelming feverish desire akin to madness. See how she first presents herself to a young shepherd by the name of Perpelitsa in the beginning of a Vlach version :

One day Perpelitsa got up early and left his sheep to graze on a beautiful plain, and accompanied by his dogs he sat down opposite the sheep under a walnut tree. He took his flute out of his belt and began to play as usual, and a great number of birds came on to the branches of the walnut tree until there was no longer room for any more to perch on it. At that very moment it chanced that a fairy wedding was passing by. Seeing the great number of birds and hearing the sweet strains of the flute, the fairies stood still with astonishment. If they were surprised at his playing, they were still more so at the beauty of his countenance. Perpelitsa raised his eyes, and what did he see then ! Three fairies so young, so fair, clad simply in a fine shift of unbleached silk, and all three were dancing on the tips of their toes and they fluttered like ribbons. Perpelitsa began to rub his eyes, but then he heard the fairies speaking to him ; the youngest approached and said : " Go on playing, youth, so that we can dance, and we will give you what you ask."

And so she danced and laughed and made merry

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with him and with all her soul-enticing beauty charmed him, then away she fled swiftly ; and with her fled also the joy and peace of the shepherd ; driven was he now to seek and seek after her. Another tale, *The Man of Stone*, in Ispirescu's collection, shows through the device of the forbidden chamber a prince on the point of catching a far-distant glimpse of the nymph :

As soon as the emperor left the town, his son went through all the rooms of the palace, which were filled with many precious stones. But he was not content ; finally he arrived before the door of the golden key. He hesitated a while, thinking of his father's warning. Curiosity, however, overcame him and he ended by entering. Once inside, he saw a telescope ; he could not forbear gazing into it, and in doing so, his eyes were almost blinded by the sight of a most glorious palace of gold, more dazzling than the sun itself. The magic telescope revealed the interior of the palace, where lived Dame Kiralina, young and sweet as a garden flower. After having gazed upon her a long time, he put the telescope back in its place and left the room, his eyes filled with tears.

Henceforth nothing could banish the nymph's vision from his thoughts. He lost all pleasure in life. And all his heart, burning with love, was set upon finding her. In a further Roumanian tale, versified by the poet Eminescu with the very characteristic title of *The Bodiless Beauty*, the lover tries in vain to get hold of her. There she stands, alluring beyond

measure, the enamoured of his soul ; but when he stretches out his arms, he cannot embrace her, for she is only a fleeting shadow.

Thus the long quest after the departed nymph in our fairy-tale appears to have a deeper symbolical meaning : the unassuaged thirst after a divine beauty, the passing image of which stirs one's innermost longings. And it is this meaning of the story that impressed various writers, to the extent of working it up into some exquisite piece of literature. So in Shelley's *Alastor*, the hero dies in the utter solitude of his heart for not attaining to a deeply yearned-for beauty ; Keats' *Endymion* is driven into far and wide pursuit of the moon-goddess who descended to him in a dream ; in *The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, heavy with a darkly poignant sense of death that often haunts William Morris, the lover seeks out his ideal in a remote world—the same whence Yeats' Niam of *The Wanderings of Usheen* also draws her beloved one, and which our own hero reaches safely at last. Compared with that assigned to the love of Adonis and Persephone, one has to notice that the Eleusinian doctrine implied a belief in personal immortality ; very consistently, therefore, it is through death conceived as nuptials that the blissful union of Adonis with his divine mistress is achieved. Different is

the issue in the old folk-story. Here the impossibility of a lasting wedlock between a superhuman being and a mortal could not be solved but through the transformation of either of them into the other's station. Indeed, in some versions we see how the nymph forgoes her own estate and becomes mortal like him, because of her great love; as expressly stated in *The Fairy of the Mountains*: "Behold, prince!" she says, "for love of thee I relinquish my divine power; but thou also, thou must love me as I do love thee."

Then comes the second alternative, the bestowing of immortality upon the hero himself. One reads in *The Odyssey* that the goddess-nymph Calypso, in order to retain her Odysseus whom she dearly loved, wished to render him immortal and ageless—*ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον*. But how, by what means she would have done it, one is not told. A hint is given in the Homeric hymn *To Demeter*, where it is said the goddess put a child every night in the fire to make him deathless. The same story is related by Plutarch in connection with the Egyptian goddess Isis; Apollonius Rhodius in *The Argonautica* refers to Thetis, how she used to encircle Achilles while a baby with flames, so that he might become immortal. The point is further explained in Sanscrit literature. I mentioned above the



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amorous intercourse, as found in the *Rigveda*, of Urvasi the nymph with a mortal Pururavas, in which, the latter not having kept to the warning, she returns to her fairy world. In the Brahmana of the *Tajurveda* the story is continued to the effect that Pururavas sought her long after, and finally, arriving at a lake where she and her fairy friends were playing in the shape of birds, Urvasi revealed herself to him and said: "Come to me the last night of the year and then shalt thou be with me for one night . . ." He went and, as he wished with all his heart to abide in that region of the fairies, they introduced him to the mysteries of a sacred fire, which gave him endless life.<sup>1</sup> Now this conferring of immortality is not recorded in the Roumanian folk-tales, except for an allusion in the Vlach version of *The Prince and the Fairy Queen of the Fairies*, where the nymph throws her child—for the child's own benefit—into the burning fire.

Then, no doubt, the lover of our nymph has to return home sooner or later. Thomas the Rhymer of the Scottish ballad does it after seven years, Yeats' *Usheen* after no less than three hundred years of wanderings. In a Roumanian tale which opens Ispirescu's collection no time whatever is fixed, and

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Essays*, by F. Max Müller, Vol. I, pp. 400-10, London, 1881.



with good reason ; there is no time in fairyland. *Făt-Frumos*, the Boy-Beautiful or the Prince Charming of Roumanian folklore, was promised from his very coming into the world “ youth without age and life without death.” As none could give it him, Prince Charming set off himself to find it. After long journeys full of adventures, he arrived near the palace that held in it the living dream of his heart’s desire :

It was surrounded by a deep forest with innumerable monsters that kept watch night and day. Prince Charming mounted his steed and flew over the forest and lo ! from high above he gained a view of the golden palace—a marvelous sight indeed. And in descending, scarcely did he touch the topmost branch of a tree than the whole forest rang with the tremendous roar of the monsters. But the fairy mistress appeared with her two elder sisters as beautiful as herself, appeased the monsters and sweetly greeted Prince Charming. She became his bride and asked him to stay with her for ever and go throughout her domains, except the Vale of Sorrows. Prince Charming dwelt with her in perfect happiness. Moreover, it happened that one day he did not perceive that he had entered the Vale of Sorrows. Then suddenly there fell upon him a strange longing for his father and mother. The nymph allowed him to depart, though dark forebodings told them he was not to return any more. Thus Prince Charming proceeded homeward ; but wherever he passed, the wood he knew had now become fields of corn, and large towns stood on what had once been desolate places. On inquiring about all these, people laughed at him ; and he did not notice that his beard and his hair had grown white. At

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last he arrived where he had first seen the light of day. Here too all was utterly changed. And when Prince Charming saw his father's palace in ruins, he sighed deeply and with tears in his eyes he tried to recall the glories of that fallen palace. Round about the place and in every corner he looked for a vestige of the past. And down he went into the cellar, the entrance to which was choked with broken fragments, and everywhere he searched about, and now he could scarce totter along. And all he found there was a huge old coffer which he opened, and a voice spoke to him out of its depths and said: "Welcome, for hadst thou kept me waiting much longer, I also should have perished." Then his Death rose up and laid hands upon him, and Prince Charming instantly fell dead to the ground and crumbled into dust.<sup>1</sup>

Here ends the story. It does not give a full picture of the fairy land. Whoever could? One gets instead, simply expressed, and therefore all the more touchingly, that piercing, intensely deep melancholy of the passing of time, of things that change and fade away, of the ever-pervading approach of death—all these being the stuff out of which great literature is made.

<sup>1</sup> The translation of the whole story is found in R. Nisbet Bain's *Turkish Fairy Tales*, pp. 260-75, London, 1896.

## VII

### THE SACRED MARRIAGE—II

THERE is another side of the Sacred Marriage concerning the union of a divinity to a mortal maiden which has its prototype in *Cupid and Psyche*. According to the old legend, Psyche was the youngest daughter of a king, and so exceedingly fair that people forgot Venus and worshipped her instead. The goddess became very jealous and, in order to avenge herself, she asked her winged son Cupid to inspire Psyche with love for a despicable creature. Cupid at once flew away, and no sooner did he get a glimpse of Psyche than he himself fell in love with her. And he contrived to have Psyche carried to a strange palace, where she was ministered to by invisible attendants and charmed on all sides by soft, dreamy strains of music. As night drew near Psyche felt herself troubled with both fears and curious expectations, when her unknown lover ascended the bed and gathered the first-fruits of his passion. Henceforth night after night he used to glide near her in darkness and leave unseen before

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the dawn. No doubt Cupid, aware of Psyche's thoughts, warned her to abstain from any questions regarding the shape of his person ; in vain, however, for she could not escape the snare of her sisters. They succeeded in persuading Psyche that her bridegroom was but a hideous monster. And prompted by them, once while Cupid slept, she lighted a lamp to look at him, and behold ! there by her side was lying the god of love himself. In her amazement she let fall a drop of burning oil on Cupid's shoulder, who then awoke and fled away. Now the most unhappy Psyche set off on her long search for Cupid. After many wanderings from place to place and great difficulties, mostly caused by Venus, who bade her perform some of the hardest tasks, at last Zeus took pity, and granted her a blissful, everlasting union with her lover.

In this beautiful story of love tried by suffering there is a little episode which I purposely did not mention, in order to lay more stress on its significance. At a time of high adoration, Apuleius tells us that Psyche felt forlorn and cast down. Whilst her sisters were happily wedded, she was admired but as a masterpiece of art ; none thought of taking her to wife. Therefore her father, suspecting the gods of being angry, went to consult the oracle of Apollo ; and in obedience to the latter's decree

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Psyche was led with sorrowful mourning, though in her bridal attire, to the top of a mountain, where she had to espouse a dreadful monster, as Apuleius puts it: "*saevum atque ferum vipereumque malum.*"<sup>1</sup> This passage of the oracle appears to be wrapped in mystery. Intentionally, I believe, with the born instinct of the story-teller, Apuleius did not identify the serpent with Psyche's lover, but left at the same time a vague impression that it might refer to him; and thus Psyche was the more inclined to give credence to the suggestion of her sisters. On the other hand, the whole matter of the oracle might have been a plan devised by Cupid in order to hide his love design and steal Psyche. Such at any rate is the interpretation given by William Morris in his versified story of *Cupid and Psyche*. After showing us how Cupid surprised and kissed Psyche in her sleep, then flitted away lost in happy dreams of love to come, Morris says:

“ And now that he might come to this fair end,  
He found Apollo, and besought him lend  
His throne of divination for a while,  
Whereby he did the priestess so beguile,  
She gave the cruel answer . . . ”<sup>2</sup>

Be it as one pleases, in one way or another, the very

<sup>1</sup> “Serpent dire and fierce,” *The Golden Ass*, Book IV, line 36, in Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>2</sup> *The Earthly Paradise*, Part II, p. 20, ed. 1896.



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fact of a serpent being mentioned in relation to the lover forms a link with the corresponding story of Roumanian folk-lore in which the serpent figures, indeed, as a hero. He was adopted, so the story goes, by a man. At a certain age he begged his foster-father to proceed to the palace and ask the king's daughter in marriage. Very surprisingly, the king consented, after having imposed on the serpent a number of tasks, such as the building of three bridges, one of iron, one of silver and one of gold, which the serpent fulfilled. For some time things went very well; because, you see, he was not like any other serpent: at night he used to take off his skin and become a youth as handsome as Cupid himself. On this account his wife was, and would have remained, happy for long, had she not run counter to her lover's warning. Taking the advice of her parents, she burned the serpent's skin. Whereupon he disappeared, saying: "Foolish wife, thou shalt not bear a child until I stretch out my hand over thee." She then went to seek him. And on her way she passed the abodes of Holy Monday, Holy Friday and Holy Saturday, who gave her presents—a golden hen, a golden pig and a golden dove respectively. By means of these she succeeded in gaining access to her lost husband and becoming a mother.



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In a variant of the same story the lover is nothing else but a pumpkin. The bride's mother, of course, cannot suffer such a vegetable for a son-in-law, and induces her daughter to bake the pumpkin—an incident fraught with the same consequences as the burning of the serpent's skin. The best-known version is that given in P. Ispirescu's collection, *The Enchanted Pig*, the serpent-lover being here replaced by a pig-lover. One is introduced in the manner of *Cupid and Psyche* to a king with three daughters, of whom the youngest, through the device of a forbidden chamber, is made to turn the leaves of a strange book, where she reads of her predestined marriage to a pig. And a pig in truth soon entered the palace, attended by a mighty retinue of other pigs, and said :

“ Hail, O King ! May you always be as joyful as the sunrise on a clear day ! ”

“ Welcome, friend,” replied the king. “ What winds drove you hither ? ”

“ I have come to ask the hand of your youngest daughter.”

The king marvelled at such words from the mouth of a pig and, thinking that there was a touch of sorcery in this, persuaded his daughter to take him. After the ceremony the pig brought his beautiful bride to a house amidst the forests. That night

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the princess was very astonished to see a comely youth lying by her side. And many other nights passed likewise, without her realising why her husband should be a youth at night and a pig in the daytime. One day a witch came and gave her a thread, whispering: "When your husband is asleep, tie it around his left leg and never again will he be a pig." The princess accordingly tied the thread, but it broke and her husband started up.

"What hast thou done?" he cried. "Only three days more and I should have been freed from this vile enchantment; now thy hand cannot touch me till thou hast worn out three pairs of iron sandals and a staff of steel in seeking me." Then he disappeared. The princess wandered on and on for three long years, journeying to the far-away regions of the Moon, the Sun and the Wind, and through their good counsels she reached her husband at last.

In various forms this wedlock union of a super-human being in the guise of an animal to a mortal maiden is found everywhere under the popular name of *Beauty and the Beast*. I shall bring forward only two examples in order to show its wide field of distribution as well as its existence in a far-distant past. *Il Pentamerone*, an old collection of Neapolitan folk-tales, contains this story among others:

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A serpent falls in love with a charming damsel, the daughter of a king. One day he asks her in marriage. The king promises the hand of his daughter on certain conditions believed to be impossible, which, however, the serpent fully carries out. And now the serpent comes to the palace, catches his bride, leads her into an inner chamber, where, shaking off his skin, he becomes a most graceful youth and takes his fill of love. Meanwhile the king and queen rush in and burn the serpent's skin. The youth then, changed into a pigeon, flies out of the window. The princess proceeds to find him, and on the way she listens to some birds saying that the serpent-bridegroom was the son of a king and, because he would not satisfy the desires of an accursed witch, she turned him into a serpent for seven years.

The resemblance of the Neapolitan story to the Roumanian one of the serpent type is obvious, except for slight differences such as the following : " The king bade the serpent come into his presence and the serpent mounted a golden car, drawn by four elephants caparisoned in jewels and gold, and came to court." <sup>1</sup> I quote the passage also for the reason that it seems to point to the Oriental character

<sup>1</sup> Sir Richard Burton's translation, Vol. I, p. 170, London, 1893.

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of the tale. Indeed, a similar one does exist in the ancient Sanscrit book of *Panchiatantra* :

In the town of Radschagriha lived once a Brahmin called Devasarman. His wife wept much over her childlessness when she saw the children of their neighbours. Then one day the Brahmin said to her : “ My love, cease to grieve ! See, I have made sacrifice to obtain a son.” Thereupon some invisible being spoke : “ The son that shall be granted unto thee shall surpass all men in beauty, virtue and happiness.” When she heard such words, the Brahmin’s wife was filled with the greatest delight, and she exclaimed : “ Such oracles cannot err ! ” In the course of time a serpent was born of her. And all around cried : “ Throw it away ! ” But she took no notice of them, held it in her arms, washed it and with motherly care she laid it in a large clean bowl and fed it, so that in a few days it grew to its full size. Now as the Brahmin’s wife saw the wedding feast of a neighbour’s son, she wept and said to her husband : “ Thou treatest me very meanly when thou makest no effort to bring about the marriage of my beloved son.” The Brahmin answered : “ My love ! Then I must go down into the depths of Tartarus and speak to Basuke, King of the Serpents. For who other, O foolish one ! would give his daughter to a serpent

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to wife?" Looking at her with very troubled mien after this, he took food for a journey to strange lands. And he came to a place named Kukutana-gara. There in the house of a friend he was provided with all things necessary, and spent the night there too. When he took leave of his friend in the early dawn and was about to pursue his wanderings, the latter asked him:

"For what reason didst thou come here and whither goest thou?"

"I came to seek a suitable maiden as wife for my son."

"If that is so I have a most suitable daughter, and thou standest high in my esteem."

At these words the Brahmin took the maiden with her servants and returned to his dwelling-place. But when the inhabitants of his town saw her beautiful form decked out with all the wondrous attributes of charm, they rubbed their eyes for love of her, and said to her retinue: "How could ye hand over such a jewel of a maiden to a serpent?" Then the hearts of all her followers were afraid, and they said: "She must be snatched away from the murder planned by the old Brahmin." Said the maiden, however: "Far from me be such a deception! For look ye! That which destiny has given can nevermore be altered." And further it



is explained how the serpent is but a youth at night, and how the charm is broken when the skin is burnt.<sup>1</sup>

This speaks a good deal for the antiquity of the story. To trace its true origin would prove a very difficult task. One would have to take the investigations very far back to a stage of society when the line of demarcation between human beings and animals was not so clearly traced, when supernatural powers were attributed to serpents, and so forth. My aim here is to establish the identity of the folk-tale with *Cupid and Psyche*, which itself undoubtedly must have been a folk-tale dating back many centuries before it was made known by Apuleius. The Latin author had taken it from a current popular tradition and transfigured it by his conscious art into a literary work, infusing it likewise with some Platonic ideas very dear to him. Other writers later on, such as Walter Pater in his shortened but beautifully pondered version in *Marius the Epicurean*, and William Morris in *The Earthly Paradise*, made it symbolical of their own conceptions of beauty, shared by all contemporary writers of the æsthetic school. In like manner the Roumanian folk-story

<sup>1</sup> Given in Th. Benfey's German translation of the *Panchiatantra* under the title of *The Brahmin's Enchanted Son*, Vol. II, p. 144.



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corresponding to *Cupid and Psyche* has inspired one of our best writers. Under the title of *The Pig's Tale*, Ion Creangă, with fine touches of peasant humour, blended into a harmonious whole various elements of the story. Preserving its fairy atmosphere, he created real characters—be they persons or animals—who speak and act according to their own nature, and it all reads like a real novel.

One has to notice that the lover in one of the stories changes into a star. There is also a Roumanian legend which relates how a whole band of angels were turned into stars by the Almighty for having walked amongst men and women in the world and liked their ways.<sup>1</sup> Now it happens that such heavenly bodies identified with certain deities become enamoured of mortal maidens, and we have thus a cycle of most interesting folk-tales based on this idea. One of them, found in Transylvania, presents us with a Beauty who, like that of Shelley's *Sensitive Plant*, tends a marvellous garden; hence her own surname: "Queen of the Flowers." None could see her but the Sun. He falls in love, and sends the Morning Star and the Evening Star to woo her for him. When they came to the Queen of Flowers and greeted her, she invited them to sit

<sup>1</sup> See M. Gaster's *Rumanian Bird and Beast Stories*, pp. 73-4, London, 1915.

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down. The envoys said: "Not for the sake of sitting did we come here, but to woo you and betroth you to the Sun." Then answered the Queen of the Flowers: "No, I will not take him, for he is but a wanderer, without his own fireside. By day he is over the village, by night over the waters." So they went back to tell the Sun, who grew very angry, and changed her into the blue flower of chicory that must always turn towards the sun.

In Bulgaria there are two characteristic stories belonging to the same category. The first seems to be a mere fragment, and tells of a mother very crafty in the casting of spells. She used to catch serpents alive, pierce them with a white thorn and mutter: "Just as I pierce these serpents, so may young men be pierced by love of Radka!" The Sun himself could not escape from such a charm, for we see him encountering Radka while she goes to fetch water and saying to her: "Radka, my beautiful girl, may God destroy your mother the witch, because she has enchanted me—enchanted me and the moon, the forest and the grass, the earth and the water. . . ."

The second tale runs to a greater length, and pictures to us the Sun on the very point of being impressed by a beautiful maiden, Grozdanka, so much so that "three days he trembled, trembled

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and never set." When he returned home, his mother scolded him for being late. And the Sun said: "What beauty I have seen, mother, down there on earth! If I cannot take this girl to wife I will never shine again. Go, mother, to God and ask of Him whether I may carry off and marry a living maiden." His mother went and, according to the Almighty's advice, on St. George's Day a golden swing was let down to the house of Grozdanka. As is the custom on that solemn day, old and young ran to swing for their health. Last of all came Grozdanka, and her mother began to swing her. Soon thick clouds fell and the swing ascended. As it rose, her mother wept and lamented: "Grozdanka, thy mother's treasure, nine years have I suckled thee, keep thou silence nine months!" But Grozdanka thought she heard that she must keep silence for nine years, and Grozdanka spoke not a word all that time to her husband's mother or to her husband. And the Sun was grieved that she was mute, and he betrothed himself to another who was not deprived of speech. Grozdanka was to be the godmother, Grozdanka was to marry them. And hardly had she put the veil on the bride than it took fire of itself. "Grozdanka," said the bride, "if thou art mute, art thou blind as well to set my veil on fire?" And

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Grozdanka burst out laughing. Then she spoke to the bride: "Listen, young bride, it was not I who set thy veil on fire any more than I am dumb; but my mother, who suckled me for nine years, bade me keep silence for nine years. Now the ninth year has come and now I shall begin to talk." As soon as the Sun and his mother heard her, they sent away the bride, and Grozdanka was married to the brilliant Sun.<sup>1</sup>

The Bulgarian original of this tale is in verse, but it has a prose counterpart in Roumanian which, however, towards the end turns into a legend of the swallow. When the Sun first kisses the maiden, she at once changes into a swallow and flies away; the Sun tries to catch her, but he only gets hold of, and plucks out, part of the tail: that is why the swallow has a forked tail.

I now come to the most interesting Roumanian story of this group. It begins:

A mighty emperor had a daughter who was already so beautiful as a child that people came from afar to see her. And as she grew up she grew in charm and loveliness too, and her fame spread everywhere. Then the emperor thought in his pride: she is much too good and beautiful for the

<sup>1</sup> *Chansons Populaires Bulgares*, by Augustus Dozon, pp. 167-74, Paris, 1875.

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eyes of a mortal, no one shall see her, therefore ; but I will give her a castle and a garden and she shall dwell therein. And in his kingdom lay an extensive valley, separated by high mountains from every other country. And there the emperor ordered to be built a marble castle roofed with silver. And round the castle he had vast gardens made, surrounded by high walls of steel. When all was ready, the emperor led his daughter into the castle and ordered her maidens never to open a window. He then locked the doors with seven locks and at the entrance of the valley he placed a dragon who should let no one through.

It happens now, what often happens in fairy tales, that a king's son hears of the beautiful princess and decides to win her or die. And step by step we follow him in his adventurous journey, surmounting all barriers, using the most wonderful devices such as horses that fly through the clouds, forests whose boughs talk to each other and give warning, birds with magical voices ; and when at last he approaches the castle with its glittering silver roof and walls of steel, and we are getting eager to know how he is to open those doors locked with seven locks, at once the story shifts to the princess herself, and we are told that she grew very sad and spoke to her maidens : " I have now been a year in this palace



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and it was then spring outside and it must again be spring ; but I can no longer see the green woods and the flowery meadows, because you keep all the windows closed, and therefore I shall die." All her maidens were terrified, for they feared the emperor's wrath if they disobeyed his command, and feared his anger still more if the princess died. And they begged her to be cheerful. But the emperor's daughter paid no heed to them, refused food and drink and grieved, so that all her beauty vanished. Thereat her maidens were afflicted and opened the window in the princess's chamber, and one could hear the birds sing and see the blue sky and the green meadow, and the forest air blew in great gusts into the room. Then the daughter of the emperor was glad and hastened to the window, and, when she felt the fresh air of spring, she grew well again and as beautiful as ever.

At this stage we are aware of someone else entering the story : a superhuman, legendary spirit, called *smeu*, who can assume all shapes. He is then passing by as wind and, fluttering round the face and shoulders of the princess, he is seized with a violent love for her and swears she must be his. And the next evening he became a star and darted into the maiden's room. But there he changed to a handsome, dazzling youth, and said to her : " You



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are the most beautiful of women, and no man is worthy to undo the girdle of your garment; but I am mightier than any mortal and my kingdom has no bounds. Follow me and be mine, and I will lead you where it is eternal day, high above all the clouds, into the neighbourhood of the sun." The emperor's daughter said: "My eyes hurt when I look on you, and I cannot bear your splendour; if I followed you I should be blinded, and the neighbourhood of the sun would consume me."

The mighty *smeu* was sad, and changed again to a star and darted up to heaven. There he stayed the whole night and looked down on the princess's chamber; but his rays were pale and dull, as if they were deadened by sorrow. And when the next evening came, the mighty spirit changed himself into rain and fell into the chamber of the emperor's daughter. And there he took the form of a beautiful youth whose eyes were as blue as the deep sea, and whose hair shone in the moonlight like the scales of a fish. And he spoke to her: "Follow me and be mine; I will lead you where no glimmer of sun penetrates, deep under the bed of the sea; there I will give you castles of red coral and white pearls." The emperor's daughter said: "I grow cold in your presence, and if I follow you to

your castles of coral and white pearls, where no ray of sunshine penetrates, then I should die of cold."

And the mighty spirit said in despair: "What shall I do to make you love me? Ask anything you will, be mine!" The maiden thought how she could prove the strength of his love and find whether no sacrifice was too great to win her, and said: "If I am to follow you and be yours, you must renounce all your power and immortality and become a mortal like others, so that I can embrace you without fear." The spirit gazed on the maiden, and no sacrifice seemed too great for his love, and he said: "Be it as you will! To-morrow I will fly to the throne of God and return to Him the immortality and power which He has bestowed upon me, and ask Him to change me into a weak mortal, so that you will become mine."

But next day, before ever the spirit had time to start on his errand, the son of the king, whom we left roaming about the castle, managed—through an enchanted flower given him by Holy Mother Friday—to steal the heart of the princess and, while they ran away, the spirit reached the throne of God: "Lord, I bring Thee back all the power and immortality Thou hast bestowed upon me. I love a child of earth, and so I beg Thee, O Lord, to let





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(See page 4.)

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me become as weak and mortal as she ! ” But the Lord said : “ Thou knowest not what thou askest. The children of earth are like the foam of the sea—a breath of wind destroys them. And their love is like a shooting star : it comes from heaven, bright in its splendour, but it is extinguished as soon as it touches earth and its life lasts but as a thought.” The spirit, however, repeated his prayer. Then the Lord said : “ Look down ! ” And the spirit saw the emperor’s daughter, who had asked him to sacrifice his immortality, fleeing in the arms of a son of earth. Then the god-like being shed a tear, the first of eternity, and the tear fell to the bottom of the sea as a wonderful pearl. And it all ends with the spirit’s revenge, which brings about the death of the lovers.

Under the title of *The Maiden in the Golden Garden* this folk-tale was given by Richard Kunish in a book <sup>1</sup> which fell into the hands of M. Eminescu, and he, being an exceptionally gifted poet, invested the story with a deep allegorical meaning, with a sense of passionate disillusion experienced in his own life,<sup>2</sup> though following some of the episodes

<sup>1</sup> *Bukarest und Stambul, Skizzen aus Ungarn Roumänien und der Türkei*, Berlin, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Professor N. Iorga, in *Trei Călători în Țările Românești*, a paper read before the Roumanian Academy on the 1st of May, 1925.



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closely and retaining even the popular ring, when he begins in *Luceafărul*,

“ Once upon a time, as fairy-tales say,  
Unlike all that once had been . . . ”

to sing of the lovely maiden :

“ She was the only child of her parents  
And more gracious than all others,  
As Mary is among the saints  
And the moon among the stars.”

In verses charged with artistry Eminescu proceeds to tell how this daughter of kings comes to look with increasing wonder night after night at the Evening Star. And she is so fascinated by its trembling image in the skies that she stretches out her arms and calls—a dream-surrounded call in which the poet expresses all the longings and desires first awakening in a maiden’s heart :

“ Descend to earth, oh, gentle star,  
Gliding along a beam,  
Penetrate my home and mind,  
Illuminate my life ! ”

At her repeated call Hesperus, enamoured likewise, comes in the shape of a young sea-lord, with hair of soft gold—a dark blue shroud fastened about his bare shoulders, in his hand a rush-garlanded rod ; then as a god-like embodiment of the skies, bathed



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in sunlight, a crown burning on his dark locks. But in both cases his face is strangely pale, and strangely full of thought are his sparkling eyes, and he appears in everything excelling. I mentioned a passage in Apuleius where he says that none among the many worshippers would have married Psyche, just because of her unusual beauty. Also in a poem of Yeats, *The Shadowy Waters*, one sees how the hero, striving after a divine love, could not be understood by his woman companion on an endless journey to perfection; and, whilst he whispers of a "love made into an imperishable fire under the boughs," she asks perplexed:

"Where are these boughs? Where are the holy woods,  
That can change love to imperishable fire?"

In like manner Eminescu's maiden shrinks back from the presence of a lover too unearthly, too much above her. When, therefore, he speaks of his blue abode in the skies and his coral palace in the deep of the seas, she answers him:

"Thou art fair as in a dream  
An angel might appear,  
But by the path thou openest me  
I shall never pass along."

And she adds:

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“ If thou dost wish with earnestness  
That I should hold thee dear,  
Thou to this planet then descend  
And be a mortal like me ! ”

In a flight of unsurpassed descriptive beauty,

“ A sky of stars beneath him,  
Above him a sky of stars.”

he reaches God :

“ From the dark load of eternity,  
Sire, set me free,  
And receive throughout the ages  
The praise of posterity.

Oh any, any price demand of me,  
But give me, Lord, another fate,  
For of all life Thou art the source,  
And the bestower of death ;

Take back my immortal halo,  
And the fire from mine eye,  
Grant me in exchange of all  
An hour in which to love. . . . ”

The Almighty, after telling him what it means to be divine, asks whom he wishes to die for, and points down to the earth. There, in the shadows of approaching night, beneath a row of stately limes, the maiden is lost in the embraces of her own page, who could harp to her on the usual strings of love. Scarcely is his arm around her than she holds him in

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both arms, and through her warm kisses, drunk with pleasure, catching a glimpse of Hesperus, she again whispers :

“ Descend to earth, oh, gentle star,  
Gliding along a beam. . . .”

Then he sparkles,

“ But not again as in the past  
Did he fall from sky to sea  
—What dost thou care, thou speck of dust,  
If it be I, or another ?

Living within thy narrow sphere,  
Ruled art thou by destinies,  
But in my own world I feel  
Immortal and remote.”

“ Immortal and remote,” indeed ; such appears to be the fate of any high genius in life.

## VIII

### THE CREATION

IN a poem touching on the origin of things, M. Eminescu says :

“ In the beginning, when there was neither being nor non-being ; when all was lack of life and will ; when nothing was concealed, though it was all concealed ; when penetrated by himself reposed the unpenetrated one ; was it hollow steep ? abyss ? or vast extent of water ? No world was there born, no mind to apprehend it ; for there was a darkness as a rayless sea. Neither was aught to be seen, nor eye then to see ; the shadow of things unmade did not begin yet to unfold, and reconciled to itself there reigned eternal peace ! But at once a point moves—the first, the only one, and lo ! how it makes of the chaos mother and itself becomes the father. . . .”

This version of creation, like the Sanscrit one which has inspired it, is the result of obvious speculation. Nor is the notion of chaos, assumed by such

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cosmogonies as the Babylonian and the Greek, free from a certain process of abstraction. One has to descend to a lower, more primitive state of mind, in order to get the folk-idea of creation—an idea that rises out of direct observation. Thus a number of Red Indian tribes in America believe more or less in the pre-existence of water. And such an old-remnant conception lingers also among the Roumanian peasantry. In the very beginning there was but a waste of water, out of which in a whirl or bubble of foam there rose God Himself. In what circumstances and how had this actually happened? According to one version, God flew dove-like upon the waters, according to another He sprang in the shape of a babe from a water-lily—the latter reminding one of the ancient Egyptian sun-god, who likewise arose as a naked babe from a lotus-flower.

Now, in dealing with Roumanian folklore, one has always to bear in mind a strong dualistic influence, I mean the struggle between good and evil, so masterfully expressed by Shelley in the *Revolt of Islam* :

“Two Powers o’er mortal things dominion hold,  
Ruling the world with a divided lot,  
Immortal, all-pervading, manifold,  
Twin Genii, equal God—when life and thought  
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.”

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This doctrine entered Roumania modified, humanised in a way, by such heretical sects as the Manicheans and the Bogomils, whose teachings took deep root in the religious outlook of the people. Hence the characteristic saying :

“ It is well to light a taper to the devil also now and again,” or :

“ God is great, but the devil is clever too.”

Such ideas, one realises, in the course of time had no less penetrated and coloured the Roumanian view of the creation. Instead of God alone emerging on the face of the waters, one likewise meets the devil at his side. When the Almighty appears in the guise of a dove, the devil accompanies Him as a duckling ; again when the Almighty comes out from a water-lily, the devil approaches Him and inquires :

“ Who art thou, child ? ”

“ I am God Sabaoth.”

“ And that ? ”—pointing upwards.

“ That is the sun, my assistant.”

One tradition testifies even to a sort of brotherhood or fellowship between God and the devil, both drifting along through the infinity of primæval waters. How came they to be found together ? No one could tell. Here the popular no less than the



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highest mind is confronted with the insoluble perplexities of the riddle. Unable to conceive of creation out of nothing, it has to postulate certain data from which to proceed. Thus one is presented with the water, as a primordial substance, and with God and the devil wandering upon it, until the former said with a definite purpose :

“ Go and fetch some clay from the bottom of the sea.”

The devil plunged at once ; but, instead of taking the clay in God's name, he took it in his own, and the water washed away the clay. Once more he plunged in vain. The third time he thought of using both his and God's name, so that a bit of clay stuck under the nails of his fingers. Out of this God made a cake of earth, upon which He sat to rest awhile. Being very tired, He fell asleep. Then the devil whispered to himself: “ Now is my chance to get rid of Him. . . .” And he tried to drown God, but in whatever direction he pushed the cake of earth it stretched under God further and further. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Another side to be considered is the blending of a number of animal legends into the account of

<sup>1</sup> Given at length by Dr. M. Gaster in his *Rumanian Bird and Beast Stories*, pp. 61-2, London, 1915.

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creation. A simple, primitive mind does not see any sharp distinction between itself and the surrounding lower creatures ; what is even more, some of the animals are considered sacred—they are what is called a totem, viz. an animal or object supposed to be the direct ancestor of a primitive community or in which the divine spirit is somehow manifested or embodied ; and sometimes it is this totem that distinguishes one tribe from another. One remembers the passage in Bernard Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, when the latter tells of her descent from a white cat. The author puts it forth as a joke, but in the light of ancient popular beliefs there is nothing to make fun about : the white cat was a totem in Egyptian tradition, therefore no harm of any sort must befall such an animal. To this effect a warning is given in a few sententious words, and then by way of explanation there comes a whole impressive story in which the respective animals are presented as helpers of God Himself in the making of the world.

Thus, among the Roumanians it is held a sin to kill a frog or a tortoise, for the following reason : In the beginning, when all was water, God asked the tortoise to dive and ascertain whether any earth could be found. The tortoise obeyed, and in a short time

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returned with some clay in its mouth, a sufficient sign for God to bid the waters retire on both sides and let the earth come up. One should connect this legend with the significant part played by the tortoise in Sanscrit cosmogony, it being considered as the very symbol of earth—a flat plain with the sky like a dome over it. A similar legend, referring to the musk-rat instead of the tortoise, is also found among the North American Indian tribes, the so-called Iroquois. They believe that, when their original female ancestress fell from heaven into the waste of waters, the musk-rat hurried to bring up the necessary mud to construct an island for her dwelling.<sup>1</sup>

According to Roumanian tradition, the hedgehog had also a share in the work of creation, and it is a great sin to kill it. When God decided to fashion the earth, He took a ball of woof and another of warp, and whilst measuring the heaven, he gave the latter to the hedgehog to hold. And one version adds that the hedgehog let the ball loose ; so the earth exceeded the sky in size.

We have seen that, with the devil's cunning assistance, the earth expanded into an immense pancake ; now, with that of the hedgehog, it be-

<sup>1</sup> *Myths of the New World*, by Brinton, pp. 197-8.

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came even larger than the sky. And the Creator stood there perplexed, and not less annoyed. All His good work might have been spoiled, had it not been for the kind bee. She flew round the hiding-place of the devil and heard him muttering to himself as usual. "Hum, clever he pretends to be, this God; but look at His doing. Were I God, I should have crushed the earth in my arms, and so made it fit the sky!" The bee then hastened to inform God, who, following the devil's hint, crushed the earth into its present form with mountains, hills and valleys. And God in the meantime rewarded the bee with a blessing, that henceforth she might produce the honey, and also the wax for church tapers. But before reaching God the poor little bee met with a great misfortune: the devil caught her spying about and struck her with a whip—pretty nearly cutting her in two pieces. That is why to this day she looks so funny, with hardly any waist at all. Popular tradition throws back the creation to about five thousand five hundred years before Christ, and it is believed to have commenced on a Tuesday. Therefore one must not proceed on a journey, get married or start anything on that particular day. Such refraining is expressed in two characteristic proverbs: "As if he were born on Tuesday," is

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said about an unlucky man; "All things upside down and the wedding on a Tuesday," when all is going wrong. In like manner one must not finish any work on Saturday, for on that day God finished the creation of the world; and on Sunday, of course, He rested. Consequently, the latter day has to be glorified with feasting and jollity. I quote one of the folk-songs which says:

" Who drinks and makes merry  
Never thinks of sin,  
God Himself joyed  
When He built the world;  
But there was no one  
To share in His joy."

Feeling rather lonely, God bethought Himself of creating some fellow-creatures. He fashioned two dolls out of clay and breathed life into them. Another version relates that it was the devil who first conceived the idea of the two clay dolls; but he was unable to give them life, and for this he asked the help of the Almighty. That is why the body, with its many temptations, is under the sway of the devil, whilst the soul is instinct with a divine spark.

Other stories tell of a separate creation. First

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Adam was made out of clay, but in the image of God Himself; then Eve, in the following circumstances: God took one of Adam's ribs and left it for a while to sew up the place from which the rib was taken. The devil, seeing the rib, transformed himself into a dog and stole it. When God turned round, He caught sight of the dog with the rib in its mouth. He ran and ran after the dog until at cross-paths he got hold of the dog's tail. Now, the dog pulling on one side, God on the other, the tail broke loose altogether, and God, the tail in His hand, threw it down, infuriated, and said: "Let woman be made out of this!"

There is another version of this story which is also found, almost identically, amongst the Bulgarian peasants.<sup>1</sup>

When God created from earth the first man, whom he called Adam, He breathed upon him: he became alive and was, like us, a living man. Then the Lord said to Himself:

"I must give this man a companion, so that he may have someone to speak with, and so that his soul shall not be weary."

He called an angel to Him, and spoke thus:

<sup>1</sup> See L. Schischmanoff's *Légendes Religieuses Bulgares*, pp. 33-4, Paris, 1896.



## THE CREATION

“Listen to what I am telling you, O angel. Go from here into the orchard, where you will find Adam asleep. Then, very gently, take a rib from his left side and bring it to me, but do not awaken him.”

The angel bowed before the Lord ; he ran into the orchard and found the sleeping Adam ; he took one of his ribs very gently, so that Adam knew nothing, and brought it to the Lord. But the Lord had also fallen asleep, and as the angel did not dare to awaken Him, he stayed by the door, waiting till He should wake.

Very soon the devil arrived. He went to the angel and said :

“Why do you stay outside the door instead of going in ?” and the angel answered : “I dare not wake the Lord.”

“And what have you got in your hand ?”

“Adam’s rib.”

“I beseech you, angel, let me see it. How is it made ?”

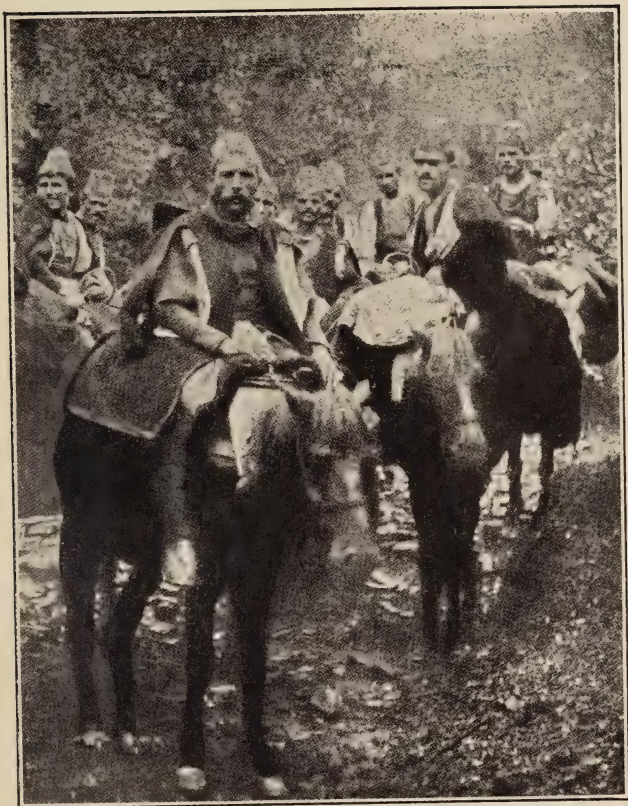
The angel, unsuspecting, gave it to him, but the devil ran away with it, and the angel ran after him. The devil, with the rib in his hand, rushed from place to place, while the angel pursued him, trying to snatch it from him. At last the devil hid in a hole,

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and the angel caught him by the tail. The devil tried to go down the hole, the angel pulled his tail, and he pulled and pulled so hard that he pulled it off, and the devil hid in the hole. "Now what am I to say to the Lord?" lamented the angel, as he returned. When he drew near to God he found Him still asleep. "I'll wake him up," said the angel to himself, "and He may do what He likes to me, as long as He does not say, 'Why didn't you wake me up before?'" And the angel cried, "Lord, Lord!" And the Lord answered, with His eyes still shut, "Oh, go away. Let me sleep in peace. As for what you have in your hand, let it become even as I said."

That is how the tail of the devil became woman, and the name of the woman was Eve.

The diabolical character of woman is further enhanced by the fact of her amorous relation with the devil himself. All these incline one to see in the Roumanian folk-conception a survival of the ancient Jewish Lilith, the first wife of Adam, as embodied by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in his picture, *Lady Lilith*. Seated on a sofa, with her right hand she loosens her golden hair, with her left she holds a mirror in which she contentedly gazes upon her face and her bare shoulders; sure of herself, of the



DRIVERS, HIGHLANDS OF MACEDONIA.

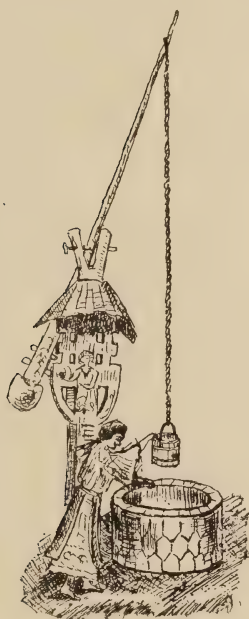
(See page 139.)



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alluring power of her charms, or, in Rossetti's own words :

“ Young while the earth is old,  
And, subtly of herself contemplative,  
Draws men to watch the bright net she can weave,  
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.”



WELL.

## IX

### THE FLOOD

THE account of the Flood follows generally upon the lines set out in the Bible. It is when one turns to details that one meets with an obvious dualism such as I have explained. God informs Noah, either directly or through a dream, of the intended flood and bids him prepare an ark in great secrecy, without letting anyone, not even his own wife, know about it. Noah proceeds at once to the building of the ark—not an easy task, as it lasted, according to different versions, from nine to ninety-nine years. During this period the devil, whose business it is to spy on everybody, got very suspicious concerning Noah ; but he could not find out the place, a secluded forest, where Noah was preparing the ark. He therefore tried to win the favours of Noah's wife, as he did once with Eve. For this purpose the devil brought her a drink of his own making and asked her to use it as the means of wresting Noah's secret from him. One evening, when Noah returned home rather tired, she incited him to drink again



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and again ; and Noah, getting more than cheerful, disclosed his secret to his wife, and through her naturally to the devil, who hastened to smash the ark. The following day Noah, seeing the ruin of his long endeavours, began to cry aloud and pray. God took pity on him and asked : “ Do you remember the first tree you struck when starting work ? ”

“ Yes, I remember.”

“ Then make yourself a *toacă*—that is, a wooden bar and a mallet used in the monasteries for calling to prayer—make yourself a *toacă* and go under that same tree.”

Noah did as he was told, and with the sounding of the *toacă* each one of the scattered pieces of the ark jumped up and assembled in its former place ; so the ark rose up there, as it was, before the wondering eyes of Noah.



TOACĂ.

## THE FLOOD

Then began the loading of the ark. Noah opened the door for the pairs of animals to enter. Only his wife remained behind. Noah said, "Come inside." She replied, "No." Once more Noah called out to her, "Come inside." But she again said, "No," obstinately. Then Noah, very angry, shouted, "Come inside, you devil!" Whereupon the devil promptly availed himself of the invitation and jumped in; and that was in truth what she wanted, for she loved the devil, and how could she stay without him? But, says a proverb, "Do not let the devil enter your house!" For no sooner had he settled in the ark than he turned himself into a mouse and began to gnaw hard at one of the planks. Fortunately a lizard noticed the hole, and put its tail in to stop the leak. Therefore we have to be grateful to the lizard for thus saving humanity. Another version says that Noah himself caught the devil at his evil trick and threw down a fur glove, which, changing into a cat, ran after the mouse.<sup>1</sup> In any case the essential is that the ark withstood all the dangers of the flood and grounded safely upon a mountain. Noah then, desirous of ascertaining the condition of the waters, sent forth a

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. M. Gaster's *Rumanian Bird and Beast Stories*, pp. 213-14, London, 1915.

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raven. Once out, this bird stayed by a carcass and returned no more; that is why Noah cursed him: "Let carrion henceforth be thy food." Another story runs as follows:

Noah, anxious at the raven's delay, sent a dove to look for him. When the raven was found and questioned by this, he gave answer: "Go and tell Noah that you have not seen me." In the meantime the dove walked in the blood of the carcass, and so has had red-coloured feet ever since. The oriental origin of both these stories is proved by the fact that they are given in a strikingly similar form by the Arab mediæval chronicler, Abu-Djafer Tabari.<sup>1</sup> There is also another version in Roumania relating to the raven's feathers: they were snow white when Noah entrusted him with the errand. But, as he gave no sign of return, Noah cursed him: "Mayest thou turn as black as my heart"—Noah's heart being black with anger at that moment; and thus the raven's feathers changed to coal black. The central idea of the legend is widely diffused. It is told even by Ovid in the lines of the *Metamorphoses* beginning: "There was none fairer in all Thessaly than Coronis of Larissa . . .," beloved of

<sup>1</sup> *Birds in Legend, Fable and Folklore*, by Ernest Ingersoll, p. 101, London, 1923.

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Apollo, until one day the raven brought news of her unfaithfulness. Apollo shot the nymph, but at the same time he punished his own favourite tell-tale bird by turning it from white to black : *inter aves albas vetuit consistere corvum*.<sup>1</sup>

The account of the Flood ends in Roumanian as in the Bible with the appearance of the rainbow, called, in the beautiful expression of the people, "the girdle of God," which I mention for the following strange tradition attached to it: Both ends of the rainbow drink from two rivers; whoever proceeds upon his knees and elbows and reaches either of them and drinks also from the same water changes his sex at once, from a boy he becomes a girl, and vice-versa.

There is a further point upon which the Roumanian version of the Flood differs from that of the Bible. One remembers the sentence: "And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the Ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japhet," then: "These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread." Instead of three sons, Roumanian tradition says that Noah's wife had altogether twenty-four children: twelve by Noah, and twelve by the devil, who, as I have mentioned, was her lover; from the former descend the good people in the world, from the latter the bad. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Book II, 542-632.

## THE FLOOD

An essential and characteristic feature of the account of the Flood is generally its great antiquity, implied also in the Roumanian saying: "Since Noah's time . . .," meaning a far-remote past. Indeed, the oldest record we possess of the Flood is that of Babylonia inscribed on tablets of baked clay; half of such a tablet in the Museum of Philadelphia contains a fragmentary version of the Flood in Sumerian, viz. in the tongue of a non-Semitic people who occupied Lower Babylonia about three thousand years before the Christian era. And even this inscription does nothing but give expression to what was then current amongst the people—a living tradition, which would go further back than three thousand years. Might not such a period correspond to the date of the Atlantian catastrophe? When Plato comes to speak in *The Timæus* of the story handed down by an Egyptian priest concerning Atlantis, he puts its destruction at about nine thousand years before his time.

Imagine a huge island-continent sunk with all that innumerable generations had achieved, with all that human tears and laughter had left upon it during centuries, all gone under the waters for ever! Would not such an appalling disaster have stirred and deeply impressed the popular imagination everywhere? For, like a crushing symbol of terres-



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trial vanity, the tale of a such-like catastrophe runs throughout classical literature and beyond that—from India down to the remotest tribes of America there is a persistent folk-memory of it. The Algonquin Indians, for instance, tell how Manibouzho, their god, was once engaged in hunting when the wolves he used as dogs entered a lake and disappeared. He followed them, but it suddenly overflowed and submerged the entire world. The Tupi-guarani of Brazil say that Monan, the divine maker, once sent a fire which burnt up all that was on the surface of the earth. In Mexico likewise there is a tradition of water having destroyed the world and men being changed into fish.<sup>1</sup> Now, according to Plato, the great cataclysm was brought upon Atlantis by the wickedness and degeneracy of its inhabitants. And this reason prevails more or less through all the versions of the Flood. Quite naturally. For simple people could not have the mind of certain thinkers and theologians. These latter, when faced by fearful occurrences such as in our own times, the earthquakes of Messina, Philadelphia and recently of Japan, would say: “Man is unable to enter into the secret designs of

<sup>1</sup> *The Problem of Atlantis*, by Lewis Spence, pp. 94–6, London, 1924.



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the divinity; God sometimes acts through catastrophes to attain higher purposes." This thesis, by the way, is embodied in Thomas Parnell's remarkable poem *The Hermit*. I quote the lines :

" The Maker justly claims that world he made,  
In this the right of Providence is laid;  
Its sacred majesty through all depends  
On using second means to work his ends. . . ."

Yes, but the people's mind could not reach a similar degree of, call it as you like, wisdom or sophistication. They are perplexed by the impossibility of reconciling the inherent bounty of God with the breaking out of dreadful misfortunes, and they are left with the alternative : either God is fighting an evil spirit, a dragon, who at a certain moment has the upper hand, or God is inflicting punishment on mortals for their sins. To the present day, when the earth trembles, it is said by the peasants in Roumania that God is looking angrily upon it or that the earth itself is heavy with human wrongs. Again, when a fierce wind or storm rages, it is because a bastard has been born and thrown out, or someone has committed suicide.

Besides the versions of the general Flood, as shown in the Bible, there are scattered throughout the world a number of other accounts relating to special

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towns and districts, which again seem to echo dimly a reminiscence of the lost Atlantis. Such is the legend of *Savannah-La-Mar*, so beautifully sung by De Quincey in his *Suspiria de Profundis*: "God smote Savannah-la-Mar, and in one night, by earthquake, removed her, with all her towers standing and population sleeping from the steadfast foundations of the shore to the coral floors of ocean. . . . This city, therefore, like a mighty galleon with all her apparel mounted, streamers flying and tackling perfect, seems floating along the noiseless depths of ocean; and oftentimes in glassy calms, through the translucent atmosphere of water that now stretches like an air-woven awning above the silent encampment, mariners from every clime look down into her courts and terraces, count her gates and number the spires of her churches."

Then we have the sunken city of Ys, alluded to by Renan in the opening of *Souvenir d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*:

"One of the most widespread legends of Brittany is that of a pretended city of Ys, which at some unknown epoch is said to have been swallowed up by the sea. One is shown, at various places on the shore, the very site of that fabulous city and the fishermen tell strange tales. In days of tempest,

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they assure us, one can see in the hollow of the waves the tops of its church spires ; in days of calm one hears the sound of its bells rising from the abyss. . . .”

A similar legend is also told about a city in Cardigan Bay, Wales, and about Lough Neagh, in Ireland, whose people were all submerged for their wickedness. Even in a secluded part of upper Thessaly I once met with the same legend in peculiar circumstances, which I shall relate in my own way, that one may not only realise but feel the darkly primitive and awful side of it :

The sun had set by the time we reached the edge of the lake—a lake we had never seen before.

“ Well, what do you say ? ” asked one of our companions. “ To-morrow by midday, please God, we shall be at Preveza. Let us spend the night here.”

“ Good,” we answered. The drivers stopped the horses and began to prepare for the halt. They lifted down the bundles and pack-saddles and took off the bridles ; the horses thus unburdened were set free to graze. Then we spread our cloaks upon the damp grass and stretched ourselves out as best we could ; one face downwards, another with his head on his hand, others with their face uppermost, their eyes lost in the unknown blue, where the stars

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were beginning to appear. The night was calm, silence and peace prevailed. Only a few light clouds, like heaps of down, floated above in the pale light, now approaching, now receding from the moon. This was the only movement in the whole surrounding country ; there was nothing else. Not a murmur, not a living creature ; even fireflies, such as we had met upon the road, were no longer on the wing. It was strange. We felt something ominous ; one would have said that evil spirits were hovering above us. We looked closely at the lake, it appeared to be dead, sleeping motionless beneath the moonbeams ; but from time to time, quite suddenly, one could see it quiver ; then ripples ran across the surface, the whole expanse of that sheet of water came washing up against the banks, breaking into little waves that splashed mournfully.

“ Look ! How restless the lake is getting ! ” one of the drivers whispered in my ear. “ Just when you do not expect it, and without a breath of wind. And deep it is, deep. . . . No one has ever explored it up to now. Fishermen will not come to it, and its waters know neither rod nor boat.”

“ But how is that ? ”

“ I do not know . . . but there must be something people fear, there must be something ; there’s

## THE FLOOD

a pool of the same kind in the Tomor Mountains, only its waters are darker.”

And the man, without waiting to be asked, told us all he knew about the pool at Tomor in Albania, whither he used to go with his caravan, a legend which was followed by others, and then all the drivers began to relate stories in low voices—old memories of the past, of their wandering life, spent for the greater part upon the road ; adventures more and more wonderful, shadowed by phantoms, ghosts and wicked fairies who haunt the cross-roads by night in the neighbourhood of lakes and springs. Only Mona, grizzled with years, sat somewhat apart and spoke no word. He must have been absorbed in some particular thought, for a little later we saw him lean over towards us and make a sign with his finger to his lips. “ ’Sh ! be silent, is this the place to speak of ghosts and such things ? ”

The old man glanced towards the pool, leaned over the edge and placed his ear near the water ; after listening intently, he said slowly and thoughtfully : “ Have you muffled the horses’ bells ? ”

“ Yes. Why do you ask ? ”

“ Never mind. I only wanted to know.”

Then, rather as though he were speaking to himself : “ I thought there were horse bells ringing . . .

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but it is not so. Now I call to mind : on the road from Ianina to Preveza. . . . Yes, yes ; this is the lake." Mona twice made the sign of the cross :

" Oh, Lord, great are thy wonders ! "

" But what is it ? "

" Do you know where we are ? We have chanced upon the Evil Pool . . . the Priest's Pool ; you may have heard of it, this is it. People have told me about it, but I did not believe it. Now I see for myself. Hear how they ring. . . . And the water trembles, little whirlpools break the surface here and there ; it glitters as though with the eyes of devils. . . . In the middle of the night they begin to ring and ring. . . . "

" But what are they, old man, that ring ? "

" The bells . . . do you hear them ? "

For a while we waited with attentive ears. The sound of bells rose from somewhere, from far away, out of the unknown depths, ceasing for a moment to begin afresh, now clearer, now more faint, sounding as in a dream in the silence of the night. We looked at each other amazed. It really was not an illusion. I thought of what the driver had said to me : " No one has ever explored it up to now. Fishermen will not come near it, and its waters know neither rod nor boat. "



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“What?” I asked. “They are ringing in the lake?”

“Yes, my lads. God spares no one; all are rewarded after their deeds.” The old man nodded his head several times and crossed himself. “Eh! Where you now see the lake, a long time ago, in olden days, there was a famous town, beautiful and rich, very rich. Such thousands of caravans came here from distant lands that everyone marvelled, not so much at the number of caravans as at the beautiful merchandise they carried through the world. Day after day fortunes here increased, and you know that, when money comes in, fear of the Most High departs and arrogance reigns; and in time the people grew wicked and nothing remained sacred to them. There was at that time, among others, a priest . . . yes, a priest, who, after committing many deeds inspired by the Evil One, turned eyes of desire upon his daughter . . .

“His daughter?”

“It is as I tell you, my lads. The girl realised it, and day and night she prayed to Heaven to save her from evil. Then one feast day the bells chimed, and the people thronged to church; a crowd richly clad, they went to amuse themselves and for no other reason. The priest was at the altar, and prompted

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by his sinful heart, he had ordered the girl to be near him on one side. And as she knelt there, praying in the candlelight with her hands clasped, she looked so beautiful that the priest forgot the service, his sacred office and that he was the girl's father, and hastened towards her; but as he was about to lay his hands upon her a terrible crash was heard, and the church and the town, with everybody in it, was destroyed, and in their place arose this lake in front of us. And some of the people—who knows, perhaps all of them?—were changed into ghosts, and they dwell in the lake to this day."

In spite of ourselves we whispered: "They dwell in the lake to this day!"

"And the bells have remained . . . one of God's wonders, and often at midnight they begin to ring of themselves."

The driver ceased speaking. In the depths of the pool everything was reflected: the full moon, the sky, the bushes on the banks, the light clouds and the stars—a host of burning lights glittered below, where one could see the church with open doors, with towers. . . . And the bells. . . . I think of them to this day; where could they be? For, indeed, they were ringing, ringing, those bells. . . .

## X

### SCOTTISH AND ROUMANIAN BALLADS

LECTURING lately on English literature at the University of Bucharest, I was brought to look more carefully into both Percy's *Reliques* and Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy*. I found in them a number of poems which, either in plot or in characteristic features, closely resemble certain Roumanian folk-products; and the analogies between them seemed to me to be no mere matter of curiosity, but likely to interest students of comparative literature.

I begin with Percy's *Reliques*. Eleventh in order, we find the ballad of *Child of Elle*. A knight receives from his love, together with a silken scarf and a ring of gold, tidings of her father's decision to marry her to another man. The knight loses no time. He goes and induces her to run away. In their flight they are chased and overtaken—first by the rival knight, who is slain, next by the father's pursuers; then, as the minstrel has it:

“ Her lover he put his horne to his mouth,  
And blew both loud and shrill,

## SCOTTISH AND ROUMANIAN BALLADS

And soone he saw his owne merry men  
Come ryding over the hill."

Thus all ends in a reconciliation to the advantage of the lover. This ballad is much similar to the Roumanian *Fata Cadiului*—*The Daughter of the Cadi*—also a story of successful elopement. But the subject is further developed in many Roumanian folk-tales, and the poet Eminescu gave it high literary expression in his *Fairy Prince of the Lime-Tree*, suffused with all the magic of the moonlight and the sleeping forests, through which the lovers ride on, as in a dream :

They pass the shadows, fade in the vales, while the horn full of longing sounds sweetly, sounds heavily.

In *Fair Margaret and Sweet William*, as well as in *Lord Thomas and Fair Annet*, the unfortunate couples die of unrequited love. They are buried in a church and, though on opposite sides, the plants springing up from their graves intertwine, just as it happens in a Roumanian Ballad, *Inelul și Năframa*, where the motive of the ring and the scarf is used, with something of miraculous foreboding power attached to them. I give an abbreviated prose translation of it :

There was a Prince young and strong as the fir tree of the mountains. He wedded a village maiden, with a fair

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beautiful face. In setting out for the camp, the Prince one day spoke to her:

"My beloved, take this ring and put it on thy finger; when the ring rusts, know that I am dead."

"And thou," she answered, "take thou my silken scarf, embroidered with gold; when the gold wears away, know that I am dead."

Forth he went. On the way he halted by a spring in the woods. There he gazed upon the scarf. His heart was broken.

"My valiant soldiers," says he, "wait here and enjoy yourselves. I left my sword behind."

He turned homewards. Soon he met a rider:

"Good fortune, young brave! What news? Whence comest thou?"

"My lord, your father has cast your bride into a deep and wide lake."

"Take then my horse and lead it to my father. If he should ask what became of me, tell him that I plunged into the water to seek my beloved one."

The King dried up the lake and there he found them in each other's arms, lying on the golden sand. They bore them to the church. The Prince was buried by the altar, to the east; his bride in the aisle, to the west. And from him, there grew up a fir tree, bending over the church; from her—a tender, flowery vine, which spread and mingled itself with the fir tree.

In the English Ballads, instead of the vine and the fir tree, one finds a briar and a birch or a briar and a rose—as for instance in *Fair Margaret and Sweet William* :

## SCOTTISH AND ROUMANIAN BALLADS

“ Margaret was buried in the lower chancel,  
And William in the higher:  
Out of her breast there sprang a rose,  
And out of his a briar.”

“ They grew until they grew unto the church top,  
And then they could grow no higher;  
And there they tyed in a true lovers’ knot,  
Which made all the people admire.”

This kind of story, which often occurs in folklore, no doubt implies an old superstitious belief in the soul embodying itself in a tree over one’s grave, and it is also expressive of a high conception of passionate love, enduring beyond mortal bounds—love instinct with a sense of eternity.

That physical love is stronger than any other is the theme of a ballad entitled *The Maid Freed from the Gallows*, which, though not comprised in the *Reliques*, was communicated to Percy afterwards. One meets in it with a girl who, being sentenced to death, at the last moment begs the judge to wait awhile, as she sees her father approaching. Then she addresses the latter :

“ O father, O father, a little of your gold,  
And likewise of your fee !  
To keep my body from yonder grave,  
And my neck from the gallows-tree.”

The father refuses to redeem her ; so do all her



## SCOTTISH AND ROUMANIAN BALLADS

kindred in turn—mother, brother and sister; only when it comes to the lover he is ready to pay any amount, flinching from no sacrifice, for, says he :

“ I am come to see you saved,  
And savèd you shall be.”

The theme of this ballad is almost identical with the Roumanian *Giurgiu*, except for two points: It is a youth in the latter, not a girl, that is in danger; and this is due to the circumstance that, as he slept under a tree, a serpent fell from the branches and entered his breast. The youth makes trial of all his nearest people, calls to them aloud to take out the serpent; no one but his sweetheart dares: she thrusts her bare hand into his breast, and lo! instead of a serpent, there is a beautiful girdle of gold—which is meant to be the reward of true and faithful love.

In the collection of Roumanian *Folk Poems* by Alexandri, the appearance of which was mainly due to the interest awakened throughout Europe by Percy's *Reliques*, one finds a little piece called *Blestemul—The Malediction*. I translate it in prose :

A youth and a maiden pass on yonder hill. The youth sings and fondles his horse; but the maiden sighs wearily and speaks to him:

“ Let me ride, beloved, for I am tired; the road is rough and I can go no farther on foot.”

## SCOTTISH AND ROUMANIAN BALLADS

“I would take thee gladly, sweet one, but my horse is small and weak in the legs. He can hardly bear my own body—the body with its sins, the belt with its weapons.”

“Hast thou no pity and fear of sin? Thou hast taken me from my parents and brought me into the wild woods. God grant that it may be according to my wish: mayest thou go on and on till thou fallest into slavery among the Turks, with thy feet in the stocks and thine arms in chains; may the longing for me fill thy heart whenever the road is at its worst; may thy horse stumble and throw thee on thy head, may thy right hand wither and thy left hand be shattered; mayest thou marry nine times and have nine sons, marry again and have only one daughter; may they pass thee whistling, and may she bring thee handfuls of muddy bitter water, so that thou wouldst drink and drink and think of my curse.”

The poem strikes me as being only fragmentary in Roumanian. There is no plot in it; and when you have read it, you are left somewhat puzzled. Why are the two found together? Where are they going to, and what did the man think of that simple-minded, quaint imprecation? Did he smile and proceed on his way, as though nothing had happened—he on horseback and she walking by his side? All these gaps become quite clear if one turns to the English parallel in the *Reliques*, called *Child Waters*. The sin to which the Roumanian verses allude is explained by the words of Fair Ellen, when she says that her gown, too wide before,

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is now too straight. He tells her not to worry, but take two shires of land. She would rather have the man. Next day Child Waters is bound northwards. Ellen wishes to accompany him as a foot page. He agrees, on condition that she shall shorten her gown and clip her yellow locks. And thus they proceed :

“ She, all the long day Child Waters rode,  
Ran barefoote by his side ;  
Yett was he never soe courteous a knighte,  
To say, Ellen, will you ryde ? ”

A situation very similar to that of the Roumanian ballad ; but Child Waters himself is far more heartless, for he makes the poor girl follow him even across a broad piece of water. Still he is at last overcome into marrying her, when he listens to Fair Ellen's affecting little song, after the child's birth in the stable :

“ Lullabye, mine owne deere child,  
Lullabye, dere child, dere ;  
I wold thy father were a king,  
Thy mother layd on a biere.”

In *The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington*, a young wanderer through London chances to meet his old sweetheart, whom he does not recognise, having left her down at Islington seven years ago and not

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having seen her since. He inquires: where was she born?

“At Islington,” she says.

The youth gets more interested.

“Tell me whether you know the Bailiff’s daughter.”

“She died, Sir, long ago.”

To this comes the answer:

“If she be dead, then take my horse,  
My saddle and bridle, also;  
For I will into some farr countrye,  
Where noe man shall me knowe.”

The girl then confesses that she herself is the bailiff’s daughter and quite ready to marry him.

In his large collection of *English and Scottish Ballads*, Professor Child gives eleven variants of this ballad. What appears in all of them to be only a faint echo of some bygone incident has in the corresponding Roumanian ballad the deep, tearful pathos of reality. The ballad I refer to belongs to the Vlach population of Epirus and Macedonia. In these parts a man after getting married goes abroad to seek a living. It happens sometimes that he returns after many years’ absence, and drops in unexpectedly like a wanderer from strange lands. Both his arrival and what follows are sung in a ballad of which I know three versions in the Vlach

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dialect; but it exists also among the Greeks and the Slavs, being inspired by conditions which are similar in all the country lying south of the Danube. The wife of the wayfarer, meeting him at the fountain or on the road, stands astonished and asks for evidence :

“ If thou art in truth my husband, tell me the fashion of my house.”

“ An apple tree grows in the garden and a vine at the gate.”

“ That’s known of all the neighbours and everyone may know it; tell me what signs my body bears, that I may be assured.”

“ Thou hast a mole on the chest, another in the armpit.” <sup>1</sup>

Then, of course, she gives him the welcome of a husband. The entire scene reminds one of that in the *Odyssey*, when Penelope, altogether lost in bewilderment, speaks to her son Telemachus :

εἰ δ' ἐτεὸν δῆ

ἔστ' Ὀδυσσεὺς καὶ οἶκον ἰκάνεται, ἥ μάλα νῶϊ  
γνωσόμεθ' ἀλλήλων καὶ λώϊον · ἔστι γὰρ ἡμῖν  
σήμαθ', ἃ δὴ καὶ νῶϊ κεκρυμμένα ἴδμεν ἀπ' ἄλλων.

“ If in very truth he is Odysseus, and has come home, we two shall surely know one another more certainly; for we

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek version of the whole poem has been translated into English by Lucy M. J. Garnett in her *Greek Folk Poesy*, Vol. I, p. 191.

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have signs which we two alone know, signs hidden from others.”<sup>1</sup>

And indeed, Odysseus proceeds to give a clear, manifest token of his identity.

I come now to Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. One's attention is drawn here first of all to that admirable ballad of *Lord Randal*, which was already known in Italy some two centuries ago. It begins :

“ O where hae ye been, Lord Randal, my son ?  
O where hae ye been, my handsome young man ? ”  
“ I hae been to the wild wood ; mother make my bed soon.  
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wad lie down.”

And in this way, by means of questions and answers, the story is very skilfully worked up to a climax ; the mother, who has but a suspicion, gradually arrives at the dramatic conclusion :

“ O I fear ye are poison'd, Lord Randal, my son !  
O I fear ye are poison'd, my handsome young man ! ”  
“ O yes, I am poison'd ; mother make my bed soon,  
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.”

No doubt his sweetheart is responsible for the foul deed, but one is not told the reason of it. If we turn to the Roumanian version of the ballad,

<sup>1</sup> A. T. Murray's trans., Loeb Classical Library, *Odyssey* xxiii, 107-10.



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found in Transylvania under the name of *Neguța*, instead of an accomplished fact, we are introduced somehow into the secret cause and preparation of the murder. A girl, forsaken by her lover, who is inclined towards another woman, takes counsel with her mother. The latter advises her to try to win back the lover, either by a curse or a spell or by presents :

“ Then, my mother, what shall I take him ?

What gift shall I make him ? ”

“ A handkerchief fine, little daughter,

Bread of white wheat for thy loved one to eat,

And a glass of wine, my daughter.”

“ And what shall I take *her*, little mother,

What gift shall I make her ? ”

“ A kerchief of thorns, little daughter ;

A loaf of black bread for her whom he weds,

And a cup of poison, my daughter.” <sup>1</sup>

Here we see that, in opposition to *Lord Randal*, the poison is intended not for the lover, but for the woman who lured him away.

In *Clerk Saunders*, another Scottish ballad, we meet with the device of the hostile brothers, who, seven or nine in number, play such a large part in folklore. They kill here the lover of their sister ;

<sup>1</sup> Countess Martinengo Cesaresco, *Essays in the Study of Folk Songs*, in Everyman's Library, p. 179.

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as they do in a Roumanian ballad, *Mogoș Vornicul*. Intermixed with the story of the seven brothers there enters also in *Clerk Saunders* the supernatural element of the spectre—the same ghastly form, which, drawn from popular tradition, is to be seen gliding with a shadowy presence of terror and mystery through many a literary reproduction, beginning with Bürger's *Lenore*, rendered into English by Sir Walter Scott himself. It is an old widespread belief that one is liable to become a *revenant* under certain circumstances—for instance, a sudden and violent death, as in *Clerk Saunders*, or a strong attachment to persons still living, to whom one is drawn by the simple power of love—as is the case in *Proud Lady Margaret*. Here the dead returns at night to a lady, in the guise of a gallant knight. She wonders at the apparition, and he discloses himself to be her own brother; then she wishes to go along with him—which, of course, is impossible, for, says the spirit :

“ The wee worms are my bedfellows  
And cauld clay is my sheets,  
And when the stormy winds do blow  
My body lies and sleeps.”

In a Roumanian version from Macedonia the story runs as follows : A mother had nine sons and

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only one daughter, by the name of Giamfichea. At the instance of the younger brother, Constantine, she consented to marry the latter to a distant country. No sooner had she departed than a pestilence broke out and the mother with her nine sons all perished leaving behind a desolate house. When Giamfichea returned, her brother Constantine stood in the doorway to greet her. In amazement she looked at him. She spoke: "My brother, what is it? A smell as of damp earth is about thee. . . . Art thou alive or dead? And tell me, where are all the others—my mother and my brothers?"

"Down they lie in the ground; I only rose from the grave; with deep longing I hastened and came here to meet thee."

In the Vlach text:

"Cu dor mare mîi-alăgai,  
Viñiu aua di ti-aştiptai."

The story forms also the subject of other ballads, in which the spirit hurries to fetch his sister, driven by the curse of the mother. This may be compared with the curse that brought about the visit of the three dead sailors in the *Wife of Usher's Well*:

"I wish the wind may never cease,  
No fish be in the flood,  
Till my three sons come home to me,  
In earthly flesh and blood!"

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The spectre-ballad is very diffused throughout Europe and especially in the Balkans. Professor Politis, who wrote a special monograph, *The Popular Song about the Dead Brother*, gives no less than seventeen versions of it. Very impressive in some of these, as well as in a Roumanian one, is the episode of the spectre riding with his sister, when the birds hover about and utter aloud in a human tongue their astonishment :

“ Who has ever seen a fair maiden and a dead man riding together ? ”

“ Didst hear, my brother Constantine, what the birds are saying ? ”

In the Roumanian collection of Alexandri already mentioned there is the well-known *Cucul și Turturica* — *The Cuckoo and the Turtledove*, beginning :

“ Dulce turturică,  
Dalbă păsărică !  
Hai să ne iubim  
Să ne dragostim . . . ”

I translate it in prose :

“ Sweet turtle-dove, little white bird, let us love together ! ”

“ I should like to, but I fear your mother. She is a witch, and she would scold and scold. . . . ”

“ Dear little turtle-dove, little white bird, do come and be my love ! ”

“ No, cuckoo, no ! Ask me no more ; for to be left alone, I will turn into a reed.”

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“If you turn into a reed, I will change myself into a shepherd. I will find you and make a flute of the reed, that I may play on it, and kiss it.”

“No, cuckoo, no ! I cannot listen to you ! Ah ! if it were not for your mother ! But rather than be with her, I would become a saint's image in church.”

“Even then I will follow you. I will change into a deacon. And there, in the church, I will bow to you and worship you, saying, ‘Little saint's image, turn into a bird again, and let us love and be together.’”

There are numerous variations of this poem, in some of which human beings take the place of birds. They might all be reduced to a simple, common type, symbolising the conflict between a tempting and an innocent spirit. In this, one is inclined to see a concrete example of the old Zoroastrian doctrine, which, together with other influences, entered Roumanian folklore, owing chiefly to the proselytising movement of the Bogomils. The poem found its way into many countries. In Provence Mistral used it with much literary skill in *Mirèio*. Thence, it was introduced by colonists into Canada. I find a similar version among Sir Walter Scott's collection, which, like the Vlach one I collected in Macedonia,<sup>1</sup> seems to be devoid of any dualistic tendencies.

<sup>1</sup> See my *Papers on the Rumanian People and Literature*, p. 49, London, 1920.

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“ O gin my love were yon red rose,  
That grows upon the castle wa’,  
And I myself a drap of dew,  
Down on that red rose I would fa’.

“ O my love’s bonny, bonny, bonny;  
My love’s bonny and fair to see;  
Whene’er I look on her weel-faur’d face,  
She looks and smiles again to me.

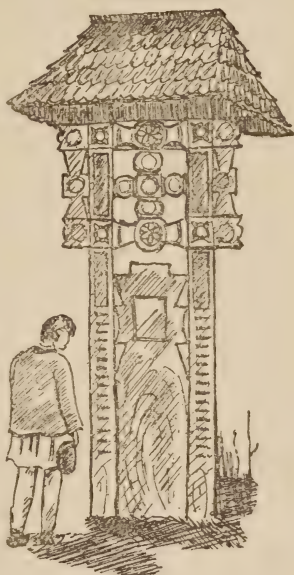
“ O gin my love were a pickle of wheat,  
And growing upon yon lily lee,  
And I myself a bonny wee bird,  
Awa’ wi’ that pickle o’ wheat I wad flee.  
O my love’s bonny, etc.

“ O gin my love were a coffer o’ gowd,  
And I the keeper of the key,  
I wad open the kist whene’er I list,  
And in that coffer I wad be.  
O my love’s bonny, etc.”

Such parallelisms among the ballads could be pursued still further. The question arises, how we are to account for them? First, the ballads I quoted are mostly Scottish; the life of yore in Scotland, its clan organisation, being similar to that of the Roumanians in communities known as *Celnicate* and *Voivodate*, a certain likeness is bound to be reflected also in the popular productions. On the other hand, a large number of these ballads are distributed throughout Europe. Having in each country a peculiar native freshness of their



own, they none the less display essential resemblances, which would point to a common origin. This it is hardly possible for us to trace; for, like the old coins whose effigies are worn out, so the ballads do not show who put them first in currency. However, by striking a deep, emotional chord, beyond transitory fashions and conventions, they can be understood by everyone and in every age. As a Roumanian proverb puts it: "We are all made of the same paste," and in spite of our many divisions and differences, we have the same joys and the same sorrows, and there is the same ending for all of us.



WAYSIDE CROSS.

This simple, everyday truth, which we very often forget, the ballads through their general appeal bring home to us in a striking way, as it were a revelation. And here, as in any high literature, lies their humanising power—a power that makes for the crumbling of the walls of mistrust and opposition, as did the old prophetic song for the walls of Jericho.





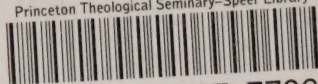






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